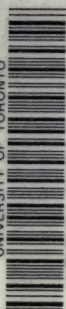


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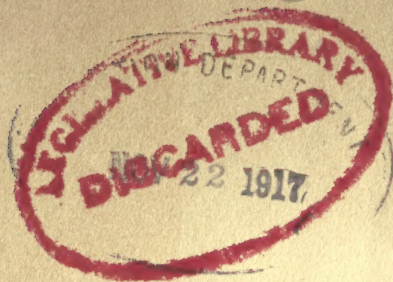
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# IN CONSTABLES COUNTRY





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IN CONSTABLE'S COUNTRY



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN HERT-  
FORDSHIRE

HERTFORDSHIRE

MARSH-COUNTRY RAMBLES

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

THE COMPLETE IDLER

SELBORNE





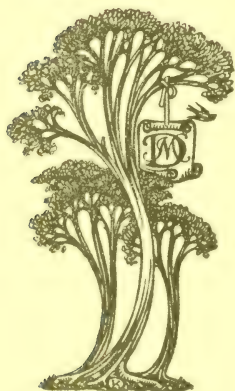




# IN CONSTABLE'S COUNTRY

WITH MANY REPRODUCTIONS  
FROM HIS PAINTINGS

BY HERBERT W.  
TOMPKINS



LONDON J. M. DENT & CO.  
NEW YORK E. P. DUTTON & CO. MCMVI

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TO  
JOHN W. LINDSAY, D.D.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

YOU HAVE SHOWN KINDLY INTEREST IN THE PROGRESS OF THIS BOOK, AND HAVE PERMITTED ME TO DEDICATE IT TO YOU. I CAN ONLY EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT SOMETIMES, IN THE LEISURE MOMENTS OF A BUSY LIFE, YOU MAY TURN ITS PAGES WITHOUT WEARINESS. YOU, AT LEAST, WILL NOT COMPLAIN BECAUSE I HAVE WRITTEN MUCH CONCERNING THE CHURCH YOU LOVE SO WELL.

H. W. T.

*"Verulam," Southchurch,  
Essex.*

*There is no other air in all England to equal that strong air of Suffolk ; it seems to blow right through and through one, and to brush away the dust and smoke of town from all one's pores with a single whiff of its clear bright purity.*

GRANT ALLEN.

*Those scenes made me a painter.*

JOHN CONSTABLE.



# IN CONSTABLE'S COUNTRY

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THIS book is not an essay on Constable and his Art. It is a transcript of impressions, penned, in the first instance, by the wayside. It records a ramble in the Valley of the Stour and its immediate neighbourhood, where John Constable passed much of his life, and where he painted so many of his best known landscapes. I have talked with men who have passed their lives beside the Stour, and whose grandsires were known thereabouts when Constable was living. I have lingered on many spots which he painted. Most of them, as was inevitable, now bear little resemblance to the scenes depicted on his canvas. Cottages have been pulled down; trees have been felled; what was once a footpath or lane is now a footpath or lane no longer. C. R. Leslie, so far back as the year 1840, found the scenery of *The Glebe Farm*—the subject of a finished picture and of a sketch which hang together in the National Gallery—so greatly altered as to be hardly recognisable. But the Stour still winds between willow-shaded banks, crossing the Vale of Dedham to meet the Orwell and the open sea at Harwich, and bearing on its bosom the few barges

that now ply to and from Sudbury, the little Suffolk town where Gainsborough was born.

The Valley of the Stour contains much of interest apart from the story of Constable and his pictures, and I have set down whatever seemed worthy of record, whether of wayside incident or local tradition. But the title of this book is no misnomer. No name is more indelibly associated with the country which it describes than the name of Constable. His knowledge of the fair and fertile country around the Stour was more intimate than that of Gainsborough. It inspired a large proportion of his work. In later life, at Hampstead and elsewhere, his heart was often in Suffolk. Standing before his easel he saw, as in a mirror, his native county, and in fancy lingered beside what Stevenson so aptly styled "the lilled lowland waters of that shire." Constable, early in his career, felt that he could paint his own homeland as he could paint no other. "You know," he once wrote, "I have always succeeded best with my native scenes. They have always charmed me, and I hope they always will." They charmed him to the end.

Mr. Frederick Wedmore, in an article on Constable's "English Landscape," makes a significant remark on that fine series of engravings by David Lucas. "Collectors have of late recognised it; connoisseurs are *en train* to appraise it at its proper value; its Gospel is being preached." He mentions, moreover, that if we except a little-known series of soft ground-etchings by Cotman, Constable's "English Landscape" is one of three voluminous records of accomplished work, kept in black and white, by great painters of landscape. The first was the "Liber Veritatis" of Claude; the second the "Liber Studiorum" of Turner;

the third, as readers may remember, covers "the ground that the mind and the brush of Constable were accustomed to traverse." The plates were issued separately, the earliest during 1829; they were published as a whole in 1833, four years before the death of Constable. Several subjects chosen for that series were from landscapes in Constable's country.

Mr. Wedmore's remarks upon our slow recognition of the "English Landscape" may be applied to Constable's work as a whole. We know how grudgingly his contemporaries bestowed any praise upon his pictures, and we have to confess that since his death those pictures have won their way but slowly to any large measure of esteem. They have, however, come into their kingdom at last. Once, alluding to a large picture which he intended to keep, or to send to the Gallery at two hundred pounds, he predicted that for such paintings the dealers would in future get five hundred pounds. That prediction has been more than verified. About the year 1820 he painted *Stratford Mill on the River Stour*; it was bought by his friend, Archdeacon Fisher, for one hundred guineas; in 1895 it was purchased by Messrs. Agnew for eight thousand five hundred guineas.

Constable, as an exponent of landscape painting, may be adequately studied in our public collections. According to a list before me, which I recently verified, there are in the London galleries nearly five hundred pictures from his easel, including drawings and sketches; most of them are at South Kensington. In the National Gallery there are twenty; they are fairly representative of Constable at his best, and few pictures in the British School arrest the eye more surely than his. Several of



his largest and most characteristic landscapes are there, and their positions show clearly that the Directors of the Gallery are fully sensible of the esteem in which those landscapes are now held. *The Haywain*, his largest picture in the Gallery—one of the largest he ever painted—occupies a central position. Recently, lingering before it, I noticed how much earnest attention it elicited. Even a palette, once Constable's, is carefully cherished. Presented by Miss Isabel Constable in 1887, it is framed in one of the doorways of the British School.

A few incidents, landmarks in the story of his growing reputation, may be noted here. Constable died during the night of March 31, 1837. That his work was warmly appreciated in France even during his lifetime is matter of common knowledge. Pichot states that the landscape school of his country was widely influenced by Gainsborough and Constable before the year 1830. Subsequent writers, notably Burger, freely acknowledge Constable's influence on French Art, nor do they fail to point out how small, in their judgment, his influence had been in England. Their judgment, in the opinion of Lord Windsor, is just. "Up to 1830," he writes, "there is little evidence of Constable's influence on English landscape painting, and though there is plenty of it now, it has come less directly from him than coloured, as it were, through French spectacles." Ruskin, so deeply concerned to defend Turner as to spare scant praise for Turner's contemporary, penned, however, a few words in the first volume of "Modern Painters," which almost make amends for his adverse criticisms elsewhere in the same work. After disparaging Constable's draughtsmanship, not wholly unjustly, Ruskin adds, "Yet with

all these deductions, his works are to be deeply respected, as thoroughly original, thoroughly honest, free from affectation, manly in manner, frequently successful in cool colour, and realising certain motives in English scenery with perhaps as much affection as such scenery, unless when regarded through media of feeling derived from higher sources, is calculated to inspire."

Several books on Constable and his art have been published in England during the last three decades, inspired, in part, by C. R. Leslie's "Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, R.A.," first issued in 1843. These, so far as I am advised, or am able to judge, are sane and shrewd estimates, almost wholly satisfactory from their individual standpoints; those by P. G. Hamerton, G. M. Brock-Arnold and C. J. Holmes are too well known, and too highly appreciated, to permit of any commendation from me. We may turn to a still more recent volume for a judgment, at once generous and discerning, on the genius of Constable. Lord Windsor, whose "John Constable, R.A.," was published in 1903, concludes in words that may safely challenge contradiction. "He was a great artist. He was original, he was true to Nature, at a time when originality and truth were very rare indeed; and if he was not, in addition, always sublime, if he was at times somewhat coarse in expression, he was never vulgar nor cheap, and, let it be admitted, his influence on modern landscape art has been greater than that of any painter of the nineteenth century."

As I write, there comes to hand yet another volume entitled "Constable," from the pen of Mr. M. Sturge Henderson. The volume is illustrated with many photographs from Constable's paintings and sketches,

for the most part admirably reproduced ; and is noticeable for a carefully written chapter on Constable's lectures. Mr. Henderson, however, tells us little that cannot be found in earlier books on the artist or his art. This could hardly be otherwise. So much has been written on Constable that it is difficult to impart freshness to any sketch of his life or work ; and for this reason I cherish the hope that some will perhaps turn willingly from the picture gallery or the art critic to ramble with me amid the scenes that so largely inspired his art.



## CHAPTER II

### BESIDE THE TIDAL STOUR

I WALKED towards Manningtree at the time of wheat harvest. Reapers had been busy in the fields, and long lines of shocks, browning in the August sun, were pleasant to the eye. I had taken the train at Shenfield, in the heart of Essex, and the prospect from the carriage window as the landscape rolled away had whetted my desire for the open road. Places of interest were passed as we neared Colchester. At Witham I thought of Gerarde, that once serviceable herbalist, who records how, by the wayside hereabouts, he had found the "small green-leaved Hounds' Tongue" very plentiful. Passing Kelvedon, Dissenter and Anglican alike should remember with pride the name of Charles Spurgeon, who was born in the village, and whose published sermons fill fifty volumes—volumes of homely Christian counsel, cherished by innumerable souls in the uttermost parts of the earth. Then, as we neared Marks Tey, I saw, a little westward from the line, the partly timbered tower of St. Andrew's—an interesting church, with an oaken font at which children were baptized so far back as the days of Henry the Seventh, and a window to the memory of Henry Compton, sometime rector here, and afterwards Bishop of London. The name of Compton suggests memories of Ray the naturalist, who was born and buried at

Black Notley, some ten miles off, and to whose memory Compton and others erected a monument in the churchyard there.

It is more to my present purpose that we passed places associated with the name of Constable, in whose footsteps I was to tread. For close to Kelvedon the village of Feering looks down upon the Blackwater Valley. Here Constable stayed in the summer of 1814, executing the water-colour drawing of Feering Church, which is now in the Whitworth Institute at Manchester, and roaming southwards as far as to Hadleigh Castle, which he subsequently painted in the picture so well known to us from Lucas's engraving for the "English Landscape." Presently, too, we came within sight of Colchester, where Constable sketched—in pencil—St. Mary's Church. To our left lay the Vale of Dedham, which he depicted on many a canvas. Indeed, the whole stretch of country between Chelmsford and Ipswich is fairly typical of the scenery beloved by him. "What did Constable paint," asks Mr. Wedmore, "but the England of every day—the coast as well as the field, the woods and tableland, the Downs and heath, the cottage and church-tower—the England over which there swept for him such changeful skies as no one but himself had ever fully understood—had ever half as faithfully and subtly chronicled?"

It was a morning of unsullied beauty. Across a blue sky white clouds moved swiftly before a westerly breeze. The wayside near Manningtree Station was bright with willow-herb; butterflies—walls, meadow-browns and large heaths—flitted from flower to flower. At the timber wharf, on the south bank of the Stour, the air



DEDHAM VALE, SUFFOLK.





came fresh and pungent from the weed-strewn estuary. A glance showed that the river was at its uttermost ebb. White wings of gulls rose here and there as a train rumbled over the iron bridge that spans the Stour, but the birds dropped again as the noise subsided, to dabble in the ooze as they had done before. Jefferies, in "Mind under Water," wrote of the indifference of rooks to a passing train; which he attributed not to hereditary experience of its harmlessness, but to their intelligence. Even a Jefferies may generalise too widely. In point of fact, birds of all kinds rise at the approach of a train more frequently than not. When they do not rise we notice the fact—a sure proof of the contrary rule. In 1722, when Defoe made his tour of the Eastern Counties, "he had a mind to view the harbour at Harwich," so he took a boat up the Orwell towards Ipswich, sending his horses round by way of Manningtree, where they crossed the "timber bridge over the Stour," called Cataway Bridge. The bridge has long been supplanted, but Defoe placed its use on record in a few words, and it lives in history for all time. Truly the pen is mightier than the sword.

I reached Manningtree on a Sunday morning. The fact, indeed, was obvious from the aspect of the streets. Matrons and maids were abroad, not distastefully arrayed in many colours; they made a brave show as they walked to church or chapel. Our English Sunday is, I am told, a source of perennial wonder to wayfarers from the "Godless Continent." There, it is true, Mass is much attended; but poor folk may throw dice on the cathedral steps, before and after their devotions, as they do in Italy, and exhibit no unusual spectacle. In England,

despite years of growing protest against the spirit of Sabbatarianism, there is little organised amusement on Sundays, and less gambling. The National Sunday League may boast that its members convert the Day of Rest into a day of travel; a Spurgeon may lament that the Lord's Day is deemed a fit opportunity for the making of pigeon-houses and rabbit-hutches; but the conscience of thousands is still tender on the subject of Sunday observance. A new edition of the "Book of Sports," though duly authorised by the hierarchs of the Church, would be eyed with strong disfavour. In these, as in other matters, we elect to sin in secret, if at all; our more public delinquencies trouble us in the night watches as they troubled Bunyan. Is the piety of village or town in inverse ratio to its size? I have often thought so. I will hazard a guess that nearly everybody in the streets of Manningtree that morning was bound for a place of worship. Small is that town which cannot boast, in the language of the old gazetteers, "several chapels for Nonconformists." The churches and chapels of many a village or town would accommodate the entire population with seats; but ten thousand places of worship, each holding five hundred persons, could hardly contain the inhabitants of London and its immediate suburbs. In short, the larger the city, the more boldly it discards the religious conventionalities—the more frequently it indulges, on sunny Sundays, in those recreations which Byron deprecated in a poor stanza.

"A lay sermon?" If you please. The text was suggested, as I have shown, by the Sabbath aspect of the streets of Manningtree. I turn to other topics.



The church in High Street is devoid of interest, save for a few memorials. The baldness of its interior would irritate a Ritualist; Mr. Miller Christy styled it "a miserable building," as well he might. Pausing at its iron gateway, which abuts upon the street, I saw, through the open door, a mural monument which would have delighted the eyes of that learned agriculturist, Triptolemus Yellowley. For Triptolemus—who needs no introduction to readers of the "Pirate"—read no vernacular bard save Thomas Tusser, whose "Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie" he knew by heart. And Tusser is remembered here in Manningtree; for, on the opposite side of the Stour, he lived awhile at Brailam Hall, Catawade, now included in the parish of Brantham.

I cannot dismiss Tusser with a passing reference. Born at Rivenhall in Essex, about 1527, he played and studied at Eton, where, as he himself records, he was savagely flogged by Nicholas Udall, author of *Ralph Royster Doyster*,\* our earliest comedy:

From Powles I went, to Aeton sent  
 To learn straightwayes the Latin phraise,  
 Where fifty-three stripes given to mee  
     At once I had;  
 For faut but small or nene at all,  
 It came to pass thus beat I was;  
 See, Udall, see, the mercy of thee  
     To mee, poore lad.

After some years at Cambridge and London, Tusser lived at a farm at Catawade. Of the details of his life we know little. He loved music, and was a chorister at Wallingford and at St. Paul's Cathedral; but is less

\* Reprinted in the "Temple Dramatists."

remembered for his taste in music than for his quaintly expressed verses, of which he wrote many. His "Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie," published in 1557, was written at Catawade. Afterwards modified and enlarged, its final version, first issued in 1573, was entitled "Five Hundreth Pointes of Good Husbandrie united to as many of Good Wiferie." It was often reprinted.

It has been doubted whether Tusser practised as shrewdly as he preached. It was long supposed that neither farming nor versifying brought him money. Scott was of opinion that Tusser's verses, "so useful to others of his day, were never to himself worth as many pennies." In support of this, Scott quotes a verse from Tusser's own pen :

My music since has been the plough,  
Entangled with some care among ;  
The gain not great, the pain enough,  
Hath made me sing another song.

Scott, moreover, probably knew the epigrams of "H. P.," published in 1608, under the quaint title "The More the Merrier," one of which commences :

Tusser, they tell me, when thou wert alive,  
Thou, teaching thrift, thyself couldst never thrive.

But Tusser's will, published in 1846, shows that he was comparatively well-to-do in later life.

In later life Tusser knew many changes. Leaving Catawade, he lived for some time at Ipswich and elsewhere in East Anglia, finally removing to London. There, in 1580, he died, and was laid to rest at St. Mildred's in the Poultry. The church perished in the

Great Fire; but Stow, in his invaluable "Survey," preserved Tusser's epitaph. Here, on the church wall at Manningtree, that epitaph is copied, and the spelling modified :

Here Thomas Tusser clad in earth doth lie  
Who sometime made the points of Husbandry ;  
By him then learn thou may'st, here learn we must  
When all is done we sleep and turn to dust ;  
But yet through Christ we hope to heaven to go,  
Who reads his books shall find his faith was so.

The poems of Tusser have long been neglected, for he had not the literary skill that imparts life to the trivial or commonplace. But his verses were for many years in great vogue, and when, in 1723, Lord Molesworth published his work on "Agriculture and the Poor," he urged that Tusser should be read in schools. Tradition states that the above epitaph was written by the poet himself; his monument at Manningtree affirms that he "Possessed a true Christian spirit," and that his "Excellent maxims and observations on rural affairs evince that he was far in advance of the age in which he lived." He had, at least, his share of fame. We are apt to forget how few persons are remembered three centuries after their death.

"Manningtree," wrote John Norden, "is a little fisher towne, and hath a small market." It lies in a slight hollow, beside the tidal Stour, and sheltered by hills to the east and west. It forms a pleasant picture from the higher Suffolk corn-lands on the north; I have seen it, too, from the marsh-lands below Brantham, its gables sharply defined by the westering sun. But I saw few features of interest as I strolled towards Mistley, almost



an adjoining suburb. Here, by the old cemetery, I chatted with a man who leaned over a fence in his shirt-sleeves, looking across the park-like country near Mistley Green. He was a native of East Bergholt; his life had been largely passed among the villages of Suffolk, and in the cornfields beside the Stour. He said he had often reaped for several weeks in Suffolk, presently crossing into Essex to go harvesting again, for the harvests of Suffolk were "in his day" almost gathered ere cutting began in Essex. He owned his fondness for the sickle, which was good enough for him; why should it not find favour now? He knew much about Constable—so much that his talk surprised me; he boasted that the artist was born, like himself, at East Bergholt, a fact which he evidently feared I might forget. He knew, he said, many "small Constables" of undoubted authenticity, in private collections in Essex and Suffolk; and thought Constable perhaps painted as many pictures as Turner, "only you don't know them all." The heat grew greater ere we parted; across the road, on the lichen-freckled bricks that surround the graveyard, wall butterflies, eyed and spotted, fanned their brown wings in the sun, restless rovers as they are. The man rambled in his talk, as old men will, a mere phrase suggesting fresh topics; but he had the rare gifts of urbanity and contentment, and somehow, I hardly know why, he reminded me of the leech-gatherer with whom Wordsworth talked.

We parted, as chance acquaintances must, and I will own I was sorry when the parting came. I climbed the hill to a spot whence I could look down upon the malting-houses and quayside of Mistley. It was a noble prospect. The tide had turned as I talked with the man from East

Bergholt; the waters of the Stour had crept landward until riverside craft rode at anchor once again. Beyond, eastwards, the wooded slopes of Stutton rose above Holbrook Bay. Thus far, to the quay at Mistley, come coast vessels of goodly size, bringing coals, and taking timber, or hay, or the fat produce of the Essex wheat-fields. When I got down to the quay the *Jane* and the *Pride of the Stour*, from Harwich, were alongside, close to the *Grape Vine Inn*; they were going seawards on the morrow. Above Mistley, the river, even at flood tide, is shallow; ships of over one hundred tons can with difficulty reach the timber-wharf at Manningtree. Ships, I take it, have always been delightful in the eyes of youth. Go where you will among our seaports, or our riverside towns, and you shall see boys loitering on the quay, watching the work upon the barges. At Mistley the large leisure of Sunday is the ship-lover's opportunity. The barges that come and go are so closely scrutinised that every feature must surely be known by heart, and every bargee hailed as an intimate acquaintance. Shelley, sailing paper boats, was truly typical of our race; Longfellow recorded an experience dear to many when he wrote:

I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
And the sea tides, tossing free.

Here, by the riverside, the romance of history speaks eloquently too. Standing on the southern border-line of East Anglia, as, according to some topographers, we do at Mistley, we overlook the confines of what was once an almost separate country, isolated by fen or river or marsh from the heart of England. It was long the land of the

Iceni ; fair-haired robbers from Sleswick and Friesland found it easy of access ; they plundered it more frequently than any other part of England. Indeed, they came hither in such numbers that East Anglia was almost exclusively a Danish settlement until its recapture by Edmund of Wessex. We hardly know when those islanders, as we may describe them, became divided into North-folk and South-folk ; but topographical features are older than human history, and the river boundaries of Norfolk and Suffolk had much of their present configuration many centuries before the Icenic or Roman or Danish warriors crossed those waters. Well does Tennyson remind us that men come and go, but rivers flow on—by poetic licence—for ever. The draining of the fens altered more than aught else the boundary aspects of Suffolk, but left untouched the broader water-courses. Long before East Anglia knew a king, “the Ouse ran northward between swampy levels to the great flats of the Wash, while the Stour flowed eastward through flooded meadow-land to the vast muddy tidal wastes about Harwich and the Naze.”

It is interesting to trace a river from source to sea. “The Stour,” writes Dr. J. J. Raven, “is the queen of Suffolk waters.” It is spelt Stowre by Norden, who, after praising Essex as “moste fatt, frutefull, and full of profitable thinges,” adds that “Suffolke be more highlie comended of some.” The eastern part of the river was commonly called Manningtree Water, probably even when Norden wrote (1594) ; Defoe, more than a century later, wrote that seamen hardly understood an allusion to the “River Stour.” Norden’s map of Essex, a marvel of imaginative ingenuity, shows the Stour with many



fanciful twists and turns ; but its actual course is even more tortuous than Norden supposed. It rises in the chalk-land of South-West Suffolk, not far from Newmarket. Fed by tiny tributaries, it winds towards Kedington, where the Barnardistons sleep beneath their altar-tombs in the old church. To the Barnardistons, as tradition states, we owe the word Roundhead ; one of them, Sir Samuel, had " a very fine seat, as also a decoy for wild ducks," near Ipswich ; another, Sir Nathaniel, was ridiculed for his invariable phrase, " Sirs, shut the doors, lest wee get cold." Two miles below Kedington the Stour touches Essex at Sturmer—the mere by the Stour—then, turning sharply to the west, it reaches Wixoe, near what was once a Norman church. Soon the river passes Clare, an old town full of interest, where William Dowsing, that notorious iconoclast, found " 1000 superstitious pictures." At Clare, where the Stour unites with Chilton brook, stood the castle of the Clares—now, writes Mr. W. A. Dutt, " a conical mound and two baileys." Here, as at Manningtree, the river, or at least its tributary, was formerly named from the immediate vicinity ; for the Anstis MS. states that the stream at Poslingford, near Clare, was called Ceuxis, or Clarus. The lordship of Clare, like so many lordships, was a gift from the Conqueror, who bestowed it upon Richard FitzGilbert, whose son took the name of De Clare, and was the traditional builder of the castle.

The Stour, still hardly more than a streamlet, winds from Clare towards Pentlow, where the old flint church is visited as one of the six round-towered churches in Essex. The parish of Pentlow lies on the Suffolk border, sixty-five miles from London, in a quiet country, not

without natural charms. In the rectory garden, some fifty years ago, was built an octagonal tower with spiral staircase ; from its summit, as folk at Pentlow never fail to point out, you may see, on clear days, more than forty churches. The village of Cavendish is on the opposite side of the river ; here, in the parish church, is one of those ancient chests, with decorated panels, so beloved of Antiquaries, and a copy, in black letter, of Jewell's "Apology," which I dare be known to covet. From Pentlow, the Stour, presently turning southwards, passes between Liston and Long Melford, and approaches Sudbury through broad meadowland, where its waters, half choked with plants, touch the old town at the flour-mills, near Walnut Tree Lane. From Sudbury, the Stour flows through the heart of Constable's country to the sea at Harwich. Through that country we are to ramble, in thought, in the remaining chapters of this book. Often at the riverside, we shall sometimes turn to upland villages of interest—villages where men lived worthily, and are remembered for their worth, and where ancient church or dwelling-house still links us to that past which is so romantic. An old land like our own is interesting throughout its length and breadth ; the annals of England are no meagre chronicle, but a library, with a page, at least, ever open before our eyes. Let us cherish the belief that the smallest village is worthy of study, and that anywhere, when asked if our surroundings have a story to tell, we may reply, "Sir, a whole history."

## CHAPTER III

### AT DEDHAM

THE other day, standing before Constable's *Dedham Mill*, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, I remembered how often the neighbourhood of Dedham was painted, with loving and exquisite fidelity, by the same artist. So far as memory serves me, Constable depicted some portion of the Vale of Dedham—in finished painting or rough sketch—more frequently than any other subject, saving only the immediate vicinity of his birthplace—the church and village of East Bergholt, and the Stour at Flatford Mill. At South Kensington, in addition to the picture named—so quiet in tone, so admirable in disposition, so suggestive of Hobbema in its delineation of foliage—there is an unfinished painting and an oil sketch of the same subject, besides sketches of other scenes at Dedham. A *Dedham* and a *Dedham Vale* hang in our National Gallery; a *Dedham Lock* is at Burlington House; other pictures and sketches similarly entitled are in private hands. The scenery around Dedham was, and is, worthy of such honours: it recently exercised the pencil of Mr. Joseph Pennell; it inspired some charming paragraphs from the pen of Mr. W. A. Dutt. "I cannot wonder," wrote Mr. Dutt, "that Constable spent days and weeks together on the upland heights overlooking this lovely vale. From his earliest



days he was familiar with it, but never tired of seeing and painting it, and the more he did so the more beautiful it seemed to him." Mr. Dutt's allusion to upland heights can, indeed, only be pardoned as fervent hyperbole, elicited by an East Anglian's partiality towards his own romantic land. We may compare it with Gilbert White's veneration for that "chain of majestic mountains"—the Sussex downs.

Cattle, dun and mottled, were feeding on the fat pastures beside the Stour as I rambled from Manningtree towards Dedham. The morning had been hot even for August; all living things seemed conscious of the heat of the afternoon, and a man who had fallen asleep by the wayside, his head upon his arm, was, as it seemed to me, seasonably engaged. My way led me along footpaths, and over plank bridges. Tributary streamlets were edged with long spikes of purple loosestrife; in narrow, twisting lanes that alternated with more open footpaths, the yellow agrimony displayed its blossoms, now fully open almost to the topmost bud. Willows shivered olive-like with every breeze; moorhens moved warily among the rushes, or lurked beneath the fragrant water-mint as I passed. Such scenery was surely in Grant Allen's mind when, in an essay on "The Celt in English Art," he alluded to Constable and other "English men of the plains" who were Teutons in spirit at least, and whose art was "of the marshland, marshy." But lowland landscape lends itself to the purposes of art no less adequately than hillside or mountain summit. The scenery around Aldborough, not many miles from Dedham, was depicted in words very effectively by



DEDHAM MILL, ESSEX.





Grant Allen himself when he wrote "Kalee's Shrine" and "This Mortal Coil."

Here, as I rambled near the south bank of the winding Stour, I remembered Ruskin's remark that Constable was partial to subjects of a "low order." Much as I love Ruskin's work, and deeply as I revere his memory, I can see no point in such criticism. Rigorously applied, it would condemn almost the whole art of Hogarth; it would reject most of Morland; it would look askance at Wilkie. It is, indeed, about on a par with that outcry against "low" subjects which Goldsmith ridiculed in "She Stoops to Conquer." Ruskin, perhaps wisely, did not name the paintings that provoked his censure; I cannot think they were Dedham scenes. But this is a digression. Soon after passing under the railroad I saw among the trees towards the south the tall square tower of Dedham church. There was no mistaking it; so often had I seen it on a canvas by Constable. I may, however, point out in passing, that the church tower in the background of the *Cornfield*, in the National Gallery, is not, as many have supposed, that of Dedham. In point of fact, it was put into the picture solely by artistic licence, for it never existed. The picture was painted on the Suffolk side of the Stour, and from a point which commanded no view of Dedham church—nor of any other. For confirmation of this, readers may consult a letter written by Constable's son to the *Art Journal*, in 1869.

A holiday spirit was abroad when I reached the town of Dedham. Cyclists had ridden in from other towns and other counties; many foresters sauntered here and there in the sunshine; a band from Colchester was playing in the small square opposite the Marlborough Head.

I did not, at the first glance, find Dedham so old nor so quaint as I had expected; many shops and inns are of modern appearance, and only a few dwelling-houses in the main street are really ancient. And yet, as we know, Dedham is old enough, as you may see if you saunter around the town as well as through it, and peer into inn yards, or consult the list of vicars that hangs inside the church, near the south porch. That list takes us back for more than five hundred years, and gives the names of John Chapman and Stephen of Bungay, and John Ancy—worthies who were vicars here so long ago that hardly a man of all their contemporaries figures in the history of Dedham, in oral or written tradition. Farther back—groping, so to say, in the twilight of history—we find it recorded in Domesday Book that Dedham was owned by a Saxon named Ælfric, who is believed to have fallen at Hastings. There was a mill here at the time of the Norman Conquest, when the manor was given by the Conqueror to one Roger de Ramis. Other owners of Dedham are historically interesting. The De Stutevilles, a doughty family, held the manor for many years prior to 1330; then we find the name of Robert de Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, who fought at Poitiers, and whose son, dying without issue, left the property to the Crown. The name of a subsequent lord of Dedham is linked with the name of Geoffrey Chaucer. In Stratford St. Mary Church, hard by, the arms of Chaucer are quartered with those of the De la Poles, one of whom became first Duke of Suffolk and, apparently, married a grand-daughter of the poet.

Some curious references to Dedham may be found in a volume just issued by the Royal Historical Society.

In 1593 there was published in London, by John Wolfe, a tract which is partly reprinted in that volume. Its original title ran : "Dangerous Positions and Proceeedings published and practised within this Iland of Brytaine under Pretence of Reformation and for the Presbyteriall Discipline." Dr. R. G. Usher, of Harvard, has pointed out that although this tract was originally anonymous, "it was and has been unanimously attributed to Richard Bancroft." Bancroft was well known as chaplain to Archbishop Whitgift and as one who had exposed the authorship of the Marprelate Tracts, and there seems no reason to question his authorship of the "Dangerous Positions." With this Tract the Royal Historical Society has published the Minute Book of the Dedham Classis, and the two publications throw interesting side-lights on the religious history of Dedham—indirectly as regards the "Dangerous Positions" and directly in the case of the "Minute Book."

To read that Minute Book is to see the making of Congregationalism in Essex. The original manuscript, a large folio, is in the handwriting of Richard Parker, who became vicar of Dedham in 1582, and had much to do with the government of the town. He was, apparently, secretary to the local Classis—*i.e.*, a body of ministers representing twelve parishes—and from notes of its meetings he wrote the volume now for the first time printed. Its pages are full of interest. Parker tells us that the Classis met on the "first Monday after the first Sunday of euey moneth," the appointed time being "at eighte of the clocke in the morninge." First, a portion of Scripture was "briefly handled" by an elected speaker ; prayer was then offered ; after which



sundry matters were discussed, especially such as concerned the furthering of the Gospel. At the first meeting of the Classis in Dedham (it had previously met at Barfold on December 3, 1582), the question of Lord's Day observance was discussed, as also the even more momentous question as to how far it was lawful for a Pastor to read in the "booke of comon praier." This latter topic was again discussed when the Classis met at Parker's house on January 13, 1583, and two of its members, Henry Sands of Boxford and William Tay of Dedham, were deputed to read the Prayer Book, and see what portions could be used "with a good conscience." The little band of militant theologians seems to have waxed bolder at each successive meeting.

Church government by "classical" ordinance, as exercised at Dedham, affords striking proof of Milton's dictum—"New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large." On one occasion, the "ancients" of the congregation at Dedham, led by Chapman and Parker, issued certain orders "to be diligently obserued and kepte of all persons whatsoeuer dwellinge within the said towne." Very curious those orders are. Briefly summarised, they show that the ministers and ancients of the church exercised an authority which would now be deemed tyrannical. The orders provided that the Lord's Day should be spent in public and private devotions, in reading and in examining the servants; all travelling abroad, such as to weddings or "ffayres" was to be eschewed. Men were to frequent their own places of worship, accompanied, so far as possible, by every member of their household. Young folk must be sent to be duly catechised. The Lord's Supper must be celebrated on the

first Sunday of every month. On certain previous days householders and "maryred" persons were to attend church at 6 A.M. for examination. Then, as now, a collection was taken at each communion for the poorer folk of the parish. Communicants were to "sytte orderly and comly in their place." On the Tuesday following each Lord's Supper, the ancients, led by Chapman and Parker, were to confer touching the good government of Dedham. Church members, when a quarrel arose amongst them, were to consult with the minister and two other godly neighbours before carrying their grievance elsewhere; they were to offer the hospitality of their houses to their poorer brethren in such measure as they could afford. The two lectures of each week were to be duly attended by householders and servants. The young were to be taught "to reade Englishe," in a convenient place appointed for the purpose; and ministers or governors were to receive no apprentices who had not mastered such rudiments of learning. No person without visible employment was permitted to remain in Dedham. Suspected houses were to be visited by the ministers and ancients, with a constable; they were to keep a sharp eye on the "naughtie disposition of disordered persons." Those who anticipated the privileges of wedlock were to suffer something little short of social and religious ostracism. Indeed, the men of Dedham, when they rebelled against the shackles of the Prayer Book, exchanged them for the more rigid fetters of Classis orders.

As I write, I have before me a small octavo on "Cartwright and his Contemporaries," published in 1848. The book contains many references to John Field and

Thomas Wilcocks; the frontispiece shows these two sturdy Puritans in Newgate Prison. Field, we may note in passing, lies near Milton in St. Giles', Cripplegate; Wilcocks, who passed the evening of his troubled days largely at Bovington in Hertfordshire, was praised as an author by Antony à Wood. Both Field and Wilcocks are mentioned in connection with the Dedham Classis. Field, in 1583, wrote a letter to Chapman—"My reverend brother in Christ D. Chapman Teacher of godes word at Dedham"—which alludes to former correspondence between them, and refers in strong terms to Whitgift, then newly consecrated; "Our new Archbishopp, now he is in, sheweth himself as he was wonte to be . . . is egerly set to ouerthrowe and wast his poore church . . . the peace of the Church is at an End, if he be not curbed." Wilcocks, sometime minister at Honey Lane, and leader, with Field, of the London Classis, wrote to the brethren for a little money to help him in his present necessity. The letters—evidently there was more than one—were read before the Dedham Classis, in Parker's house, on January 13, 1583-1584. When next the Classis met, at Hog Lane, Barfold, Mr. Tye announced that money had been sent to Wilcocks, and it was decided to request payment, or a letter promising same. But Wilcocks, apparently, was still in difficulties, and when the Classis met at Colchester, in the following April, a further sum for his relief was raised by the brethren. The Subscription List is printed in the Minute Book; Chapman gave twenty shillings, Tye ten, and Parker five. I am sorry to add that it was subsequently resolved to send a letter to Wilcocks, reproving him for his neglect to acknowledge the loan. Wilcocks, however, seems to



have regarded these moneys as a gift ; for when the Classis presently met at Peldon—a little Essex village that looks down upon Mersea Island—it was deemed necessary to again write to Wilcocks, pointing out that the brethren did not intend to give, but to lend him money.

But it was not of the Dedham Classis that I thought as I lingered in the streets of that once busy town. I could not forget that I was in Constable's country, and next morning, on leaving the inn, I turned towards the mill beside the Stour. It now bears little resemblance to the mill in the famous picture. The mill, as Constable knew and painted it, was purchased by his father, Golding Constable, who also owned a water-mill at Flatford, and two wind-mills at East Bergholt. A large brick structure now stands on the site of the old mill, and men with whom I chatted as I leaned over the iron bridge were intent on fishing rather than on art. That morning they had caught a score of bream in the mill-pond, some of which weighed more than two pounds each. They were still exchanging congratulations, as all good fishermen should, when I left them to search for the precise spot from which *Dedham Mill* was painted. It is no longer easy to trace this ; I could not get the mill and the church tower in their respective positions as in the picture. After wandering for some time along the tow-path I concluded that Constable probably placed the tower farther to the right than its actual position warranted. In the picture the tower is near the centre of the canvas, but from no standpoint could I obtain a view similar to that painted by Constable. I refer merely to the general disposition of objects ; the

actual configuration of the scene is naturally much changed.

I was more successful in my search for some person who had known the family of Golding Constable. As I stood before the almshouses, bequeathed to Dedham by the will of Mr. Stephen Dunton in 1517, a Dedham patriarch came down the street. He nodded cheerily, and asked if I had seen any older almshouses in England. I think he was relieved when I replied that I had not. This local pride, when one comes to think of it, is a remarkable thing. We boast of any feature, no matter what, if only it is peculiar to our own neighbourhood. Such pride—such patriotism *in petto*—is found all over England, and, I suppose, in every other country too. At St. Albans you are told that the “Fighting Cocks,” a round house beside the river Ver, is the oldest inhabited house in England; somewhere on the Yorkshire moors you may see, or could quite recently, a fire that has burned for two generations without having been extinguished for one hour during the whole period; it would take much space and time to enumerate all the parishes that claim to show the smallest church in our land. The old man beside me claimed distinction, too, for he is, I was given to believe, the only man in Dedham who can remember Abram Constable—whose portrait, painted by his brother John, is now in the possession of Mr. W. Cuthbert Quilter. At Dedham Mill, young Jack, now white with age, worked side by side with “Ab’rum”; he knows “Barg’ult” and the “Stow’er” as he knows his own hand, and can spin many a yarn concerning the Essex and Suffolk of a bygone age. Jack, if I remember rightly, is a little over eighty years old; but, even so,

if ever he saw John Constable it must have been when the artist was nearing his end, and had long been living in London. He was not quite clear on the subject of dates; and appeared surprised when I remarked that he was in his early teens when the artist died in 1837.

At Dedham Grammar School, under the care of the Rev. T. G. Grimwood, Constable—as Mr. Arthur Chamberlain puts it—“finished his education.” I would say rather that here his education seriously commenced. For he had previously been sent to school at Lavenham, where the headmaster neglected his pupils to go a-wooing, and the usher flogged them as frequently and severely as he could. The school was an ancient foundation, endowed by one William Littlebury in 1571; it doubtless afforded such education as was usually imparted at similar schools. But Constable never became a bookworm, much less a scholar. As Macaulay would have said, his prose was probably not polished to the true Ciceronian elegance, nor his verse exactly Virgilian. Here, nevertheless, his education really began; here he acquired such scholarship as he ever possessed; here, by the riverside and in the neighbouring corn-fields and meadows, he loitered and observed, with an unfailing eye for Nature in all her many moods. Here, too, he wandered and sketched with his friend John Dunthorne, gaining fresh insight daily into the secrets of the art of landscape painting, of which he was afterwards to become so incomparable a master. The friendship made lasting impressions on both lives. It did much to foster Constable’s love for his art; it brought material benefit to Dunthorne, whose son was befriended by the artist, who assisted him in London and grieved



much when, in 1832, young Dunthorne died of consumption.

Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that the Vale of Dedham, rather than the neighbourhood of East Bergholt, is associated in most minds with the name of Constable. As Mr. R. A. Beckett, a very charming writer, has so aptly put it: "The chief interest of Dedham lies for most people in the fact that it is the gate, so to speak, of that beautiful country which has been made famous by the genius of Constable . . . there is hardly a phase of the scenery of this beautiful river-valley, in any of its aspects of sky or season, which Constable has not seized for us." An interesting anecdote in this connection was related by the artist in a letter to Lucas, and may be found in Leslie's "Memoirs." As Constable was returning to Hampstead from the funeral of John Dunthorne, two gentlemen, strangers alike to him and to each other, travelled by the same coach. As the coach crossed the Vale of Dedham, Constable pointed out the general beauty of the landscape, with an artist's fervour, we may well suppose. "Yes sir," said one of them, "this is Constable's country." The artist had the good sense to reveal his identity, thereby, perhaps, escaping both praise and censure. No Boswell has set down for us the subsequent conversation in the coach; but Constable probably seized the opportunity to urge a return to Nature—a return from the idealised landscapes of other lands to the actual landscapes of our own. We are now interested in the anecdote chiefly because it proves that, so early as 1832, the artist, despite many detractors, was sufficiently famous for his name to be linked with the district which he knew as he knew no



DEDHAM LOCK.

Sometimes called THE LEAPING HORSE.





other. He felt that the artist who would study Nature face to face might spend his days very profitably among the waterside pastures and winding lanes around Dedham; for he loved, as he once wrote in a different connection, "the sound of water escaping from mill-dams, &c., willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork," and loving such things he could but love the Dedham of his early days.

I have said that in *Dedham Mill* the tower of St. Mary's Church occupies, approximately, the centre of the canvas. Constable loved to paint the scenery of Dedham from standpoints which enabled him to place it in that position. It stands thus in the beautiful *Dedham Vale* at South Kensington; in the upright *Lock on the Stour*; in the painting, similarly entitled, at the National Gallery; in the well-known picture, painted about 1815, with a labourer and a cow conspicuous in the foreground; and in that called *On the Stour*, showing three barges near the old bridge between Dedham and Flatford Mill. In the *Dedham Lock*, already mentioned—better known, perhaps, as *The Leaping Horse*, and now at Burlington House—the church tower is placed on the extreme right, in what is probably its true position, relatively to the point of view. For *Dedham Lock*, exhibited at the Academy in 1825, depicts a scene a little westward from the mill—a willow-shaded spot, where a large horse, with a boy on its back, is leaping one of the wooden barriers placed across the towpath to prevent the straying of cattle. Such barriers—like the top bar of a gate, hinged upon a post—are still beside the Stour. The picture is unquestionably fine. Sketched upon the spot, it was largely painted in London, and

Constable lavished upon it a deal of labour. He liked it himself; the Academy, for once, liked his picture too. To point out its beauties now is to describe the obvious. Atmosphere, movement, colour; disposition and co-ordination of parts; in no particular does it readily offer points to the adverse critic. As Mr. Sturge Henderson has well said—"The vigour and movement of the picture are immense. The resistless, onward sweep of sky and water bespeak a potentiality of which the life and strength of the (horse) is but an off-shoot. In the direct and simple representation of a scene in rural life, the artist has communicated the reality of energy and of force with a success not always attained by Watts or Rodin when they essay the more ambitious task of abstractly conceiving a quality and representing it by means of a type." *The Leaping Horse*, however, was returned to the artist after the exhibition. It was too far removed from contemporary taste to find a purchaser.

## CHAPTER IV

### FLATFORD MILL

NEXT morning, I went on pilgrimage to Flatford Mill. Seeking the riverside, my way thence lay through a country sweet to look upon—a country that brought to mind the land of which Lloyd Mifflin sings :

. . . dim views  
Between the willow branches, of faint blues  
That lie upon the waters—azure blanks  
Of beauty, studded, here and there, with ranks  
Of arrow-headed weeds, where his strange hues  
The dragon-fly displays.

All pilgrimages, as it seems to me, are actuated by a spirit essentially the same. For surely we are pilgrims, in the best sense of the word, whenever we seek a spot sacred to the memory of those “who of the past are all that cannot pass away.” We get profit to our souls whether we seek the haunts of preacher, poet, or painter ; moreover, when our pilgrimage leads us through a pleasant land, where birds sing to us as we go upon our way, and the air is so sweet as to raise the spirits, we may find surer healing for our bodily infirmities than was found of old by folk who wandered far in order to look upon—perchance to touch—the bones of some saint.

A homily is well enough in its way, and may serve for a prologue ; but I shall hardly be asked to lengthen it



on the bank of the Stour. So charming is the broad vale that stretches between the mills of Dedham and Flatford, and so perpetually does the river turn and twist, that an entire morning may pass while one saunters along that tow-path depicted in so many of Constable's pictures. Mr. Dutt thinks it impossible to get quickly to Flatford Mill if one has never before been in the neighbourhood. The remark may prove true for many reasons. You may be detained by some veteran angler, anxious to narrate his more notable achievements, and whose importunities are not to be denied. A pretty girl, reading in a punt, is even more attractive; and men of botanical predilections are prone to loiter where the burdocks grow tall and strong, where figwort and pink agrimony stand side by side, and water-mint, here exceedingly plentiful, nestles closely under the flowering rush, or in the shadow of tall valerian or yellow tansies.

The immediate neighbourhood of Flatford Mill is less changed, since Constable painted, than might be expected. But the great increase in surrounding foliage, particularly in the number of large willows, is a noticeable feature; and I agree with those who, as Mr. Dutt puts it, consider that "if it were not for an ugly modern chimney-shaft it would be an even more charming subject for artists now than it was in Constable's time." The large chestnut-trees on the islet near the lock almost hide the mill itself from view as one stands on the spot from which *Flatford Mill on the River Stour* was sketched. The point of view is in this case easily determined. In the immediate foreground of the picture a boy is seated on a barge-horse near the projecting timbers of a bridge across the Stour. That bridge still stands, a little west-

ward from the mill ; it has been lovingly sketched by Mr. J. Wylie. When we lean over it to watch the fish dart here and there, as Constable must so often have done, we see the spot is but little altered in the century that has passed since he conferred an immortality upon the neighbourhood.

Constable's *Flatford Mill*, signed by the artist and dated 1817, was bequeathed to the National Gallery by Miss Isabel Constable in 1888. It hangs in the British School, next to Morland's *Inside of a Stable* ; it is fairly characteristic of the artist's methods of treatment, and a bold example of his views on landscape painting. Those views were expounded in three lectures delivered at Worcester in 1835, and *Flatford Mill* was one of several pictures then chosen to represent his work. The picture is too well known to need description here ; but we may note in passing how thoroughly it illustrates his theory (expressed in regard to the Worcester Exhibition) that "ideal art" in landscape is "sheer nonsense." At the same time, Constable protested against a mere slavish imitation of Nature, urging that a landscape painter must be something more than a copyist. The position is not, perhaps, easily explained, but a few words may be said in illustration.

Let us suppose ourselves standing near Flatford Bridge with Constable's picture placed conveniently for comparison with the actual scene. The scene is before us, a century older than the picture, but "wonderfully like." For present purposes, the brief words of description in the Catalogue of the National Gallery may serve :

On the left of the foreground a draught-horse, bestridden by a boy, stands on the towing-path, while a man adjusts the rope by which it is

attached to a barge floating in the weir, under the guidance of bargemen. On the right is an old and dilapidated oak-tree, round the trunk of which a streamlet winds between sedgy banks. In the middle distance the river is intersected by a lock, surrounded by trees and farm buildings. Above, a sunny sky, across which large clouds are drifting.

Now, obviously, the scene here depicted in words, faithful so far as they go, is commonplace. No detail is named which may not be found in a dozen counties in England; moreover, we might without difficulty find other mill-stream scenery to which the whole description would apply with almost equal fidelity. We might also find an artist to paint such mill-stream scenery with great accuracy, but would he make a picture like *Flatford Mill*? The answer is, of course, that only a Constable could paint Constable's pictures. What, then, did Constable impart to the picture which was more than delineation and less than that "ideal" art which he despised? In *Flatford Mill* Constable depicted a scene so familiar to him that he might have both sketched and painted it from memory. Knowing the scene, and making due allowance for the lapse of time, I will venture the assertion that hardly any detail in the picture, however trivial, was invented by the artist; nor do I think it probable that any material feature was omitted when the sketch was executed. Is *Flatford Mill* more than a transcript from Nature?

The answer is not far to seek. *Flatford Mill* is a transcript, but a transcript of unusual fidelity. It shows, I think, that a landscape may be truly ideal, apart from any invention by the artist. In the first place, as touching mere configuration, the true artist alone can judge what is worthy of portrayal; secondly, he, and





FLATFORD MILL, ON THE RIVER STOUR.



he only, can seize the right moment in which to portray it. These two qualifications, with all that they embrace and connote, tell for much in the exercise of landscape art; they go far to explain an apparent contradiction when we say that Constable, by precept and example more than a "mere copyist," was yet, as Lord Windsor has remarked, "an uncompromising realist." Constable saw more than less gifted artists; hence his transcripts from the neighbourhood of grove and field are ideal in the best sense of the term. His skies, for instance, are fantastic imaginations to those who have studied the heavens less lovingly than he. That he was a realist will hardly be disputed; but how ideal the real may appear we perceive, clearly enough, as we turn the pages of "Constable's Sketches." In short, as truth is stranger than fiction, so Nature has more moods and more diverse manifestations than are dreamt of in the philosophy of undiscerning men. The "transcript" of one artist becomes an "Impression" at the hands of another, and we find Constable himself styled "the father of modern Impressionism." Perhaps the gist of the matter lies here: the ablest copy is but approximately faithful, and the artist who should copy with absolute fidelity would be the greatest landscape painter in the world. And—to push the point to its extremity—does not this position deliver us into the hands of Locke, who tells us that all knowledge is derived from experience, the outcome of observation?

Thus, unless I am greatly mistaken, Constable was an ideal artist because he copied more faithfully than many others, not because he strove to depict more than he could see. Close observers of Nature have noticed how, at



certain times, the sky displays strange hues and assumes vagaries of cloud-form, and the artist who should faithfully reproduce those hues and forms would be censured as an eccentric Impressionist. I believe it is this snapshotting of Nature unawares—to borrow a bold expression—and nothing more than this, which gains some artists the titles of Idealist and Impressionist. Their most *outré* effects are less the outcome of fancy than is commonly supposed. Said a well-known black-and-white artist to me some months back, "Leader, of course, is all very well in his way, but he hasn't an atom of imagination." Here, I think, was a word misused. My friend can hardly have wished to blame Leader for not "imagining" his landscapes, wholly or in part. More probably, he missed from the canvas of that great painter certain effects of atmosphere and mood for which he had looked—effects so seldom produced successfully that their presence is attributed to the imagination of an ideal artist. Nor is this less true if we say, with the late William Sharp, that imagination in an artist is but another name for poetic insight or artistic grasp.

Flatford Mill has been painted a thousand times, with infinitely varying degrees of success, since it was painted by Constable. Large and in many ways admirable photographs of the spot may be bought in Dedham, the nearest town. A graceful little sketch from Mr. Pennell's pencil is known to many, a sketch that, despite its slightness, and some not very happy execution of foliage, sets the scene before us vividly. The mill-pool, and the railed and balustraded hand-bridge, have been sketched by Mr. Wylie, whose sketch, however, does not embrace the old dormer windows

and chimney-stacks, noticeable features in Constable's picture. I counted a score of artists, mostly ladies, between the Mill and Flatford Bridge; their work, in all stages of progress, was interesting to watch. They were all in earnest, all zealous to perpetuate, however inadequately, something of the charm of time and place; all hopeful that they, too, might place on canvas a not unworthy vision of Flatford Mill. I saw one delicious piece of colouring, with the breeze in the willows, the August sunlight on the moving waters, a boat among the withes, and a certain indefinable impression of afternoon quietness pervading the whole.

I may remind readers that here at Flatford, for some few years, Constable worked in his father's mill. For like Rembrandt, and like Etty, Constable was a miller's son; Grant Allen, in an essay entitled "The Recipe for Genius," calls him "an almost miraculous miller." He worked, indeed, sometimes at Flatford and sometimes at Dedham; we read that he was often called the "handsome miller"; and a portrait, drawn by Daniel Gardner when Constable was twenty years old, lends colour to the report. During the period between quitting school and finally settling in London as an avowed artist, he devoted his leisure to that art which claimed his best energies, rambling over the whole neighbourhood and painting many pictures in the open air—ever, to him, the true studio. We know, too, from letters written to Smith the engraver, that he read books on art and anatomy, and tried his hand at etching. Unlike so many artistic and literary amateurs—some of whom, as Southey insisted, mistake inclination for ability, and suppose uncommon genius to be best shown

by despising common duties—Constable did his mill-work honestly, but not so cheerfully as to deceive his father, who knew where his son's heart lay, and what was the goal of his ambitions. So when at length he quitted the mill for ever it was with that father's sanction, and it is pleasing to remember that Golding Constable lived to see his son famous, and a repeated exhibitor at the Royal Academy. Many tentative sketches and paintings of Flatford Mill were executed by Constable at an early period ; a more serious attempt, painted soon after the year 1800, resulted in a *Flatford Mill* which was rejected by the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy. But the picture led to authoritative encouragement. West, then President of the Academy, said to the artist, "Don't be disheartened, young man, we shall hear of you again ; you must have loved Nature very much before you could have painted a picture like this" ; then, by a demonstration in chalk, he gave him a lesson in chiaroscuro. Constable wisely took the lesson to heart, and when, in later days, he prepared his "English Landscape," he announced that the series was principally intended to mark the phenomena of the "chiaroscuro of Nature."

*Boat-building near Flatford Mill*, a small picture now at South Kensington, was painted some two years before the larger canvas in the National Gallery ; it will be remembered, in passing, that *Ship-building at Ipswich* is the title of a pencil-sketch executed in 1817, proving that such subjects attracted him for their own sake. The picture at South Kensington is one on which the eye delights to dwell ; it is rich in colour, freely unconventional, and finished with obvious care ; many details being rendered, as a critic has said, with Dutch-





BOAT-BUILDING NEAR FLATFORD MILL.



like accuracy. The *View on the Stour*, an oil sketch now in the same gallery, is very broad and effective; it is a view at Flatford, looking over the mill-pool towards the east. Other pictures, larger and more widely famous, are studies, as we shall presently see, of the same vicinity from different standpoints.

To linger among the sun-lit greenery of Flatford is to think of that beautiful line in Mr. Swinburne's "Ballad of Bath": "Peace hath here found harbourage mild as very sleep." All is suggestive of ease, and of peaceful seclusion from the madding crowd; the world-worn merchant is wise when he retires to such a spot. The music of the water at the weir; the scarcely audible murmur of insects; the occasional click of an oar in the rowlock; the cackle of fowls around the old mill, or from the farther distance near the Valley Farm; the rustle of the breeze among a million leaves; the laughter of boys, not sufficiently noisy to fret the more patient youth as he angles in the higher pool; the unfathomable joy of the lark that "singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest": what pleasures of the town are not found wanting when weighed in the balances with these? Such, at least, are the amenities of life most commended by wisest men. I am of those who believe David to have written the twenty-third Psalm—"his autograph," says Mr. F. B. Meyer, "is on every verse"—and who believe that he wrote it late in life, when his battles were almost over, and memory reverted to earlier shepherd days on the hills of Bethlehem. And to numberless souls the words, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters," are the sweetest in that brief song of the sweet singer of Israel.



## CHAPTER V

### THE VALLEY FARM

IN the churchyard at East Bergholt, one mile from Flatford Mill, stands a small headstone, bearing a few words of much interest to admirers of Constable. It is to the memory of William Lott, who died in 1849, aged eighty-eight; "he resided at Gibeon's Farm, near Flatford Mill in this parish, all his life." With Lott Constable must have been very intimate; how dearly he loved the vicinity of Lott's home, and how highly he esteemed it as a fit subject for the exercise of his art, is attested by several of his most successful pictures. Many prints from those pictures are before me as I write, and here, sitting on the old brick wall, so beautifully freckled with lichen and fern, I have been looking through my collection once again, and glancing from time to time from the picture to the original, from engraving or photograph to the now famous house, so long the home of Willy Lott.

I have reached the most important spot in my rambles, a spot more intimately associated with Constable's pictures than any other that I am to visit. I may say at once, for the sake of the ignorant, that Willy Lott's house was painted by Constable not only in the oil sketch so named, engraved by Lucas and published after the artist's death, but in other pictures known by different

names ; and two of his greatest works, *The Valley Farm* and *The Haywain*, depict the same house from opposite standpoints. The house stands at the river's edge, on the Suffolk side of Flatford Mill. Just now I crossed Flatford Bridge, and turning to the right, came at once to the spot from which Constable sketched *The Haywain*. The scene is as little altered as that of *Flatford Mill*. Let us compare it with a good photograph from the original—his largest picture in the National Gallery, as I have already mentioned. The old wall referred to stands a little to the right, but out of the field of the picture, as does also the mill-house, covered with ivy and vine and virginian creeper. On the Essex side of the Stour the footpath is now overhung by trees ; but the wing of the farm-house shown on the left is almost identically the same. There is the brick chimney-stack ; there the sloping, red-tiled, gabled roof ; there is the protruding step, still flanked by a wooden hand-rail, from which, in Constable's picture, a woman stoops to dip her pitcher in the gleaming waters of the stream. In the oil sketch of the same subject, now at South Kensington, a horse stands in the immediate foreground, with a boy upon his back, but these were omitted from the finished picture ; the spaniel at the water's edge is seen in both. The dog is shown, too, in the sketch *Willy Lott's House*, in the same gallery, as is also the woman dipping water ; but the sketch was taken a little nearer to the house.

*The Haywain*, first entitled *Landscape, Noon*, was sent by Constable to the Royal Academy on April 10, 1821, as he himself records. It is signed "John Constable, pinxit, London, 1821." In 1824 the picture was at the

Louvre ; it was presently sold for £400, and was lent, many years afterwards, to an exhibition of Old Masters at the Royal Academy. By that time the critics had agreed to admire it, and since its presentation to the National Gallery in 1886, its presumptive value is greater every year. Nobody now denies that it is a great, perhaps a very great, picture. It stands, as I know from experience, one of the severest tests. Go into the National Gallery, view that landscape steadily and sympathetically from a sufficient distance, and presently the frame, the wall, the Gallery itself is gone, and you are looking, not upon *The Haywain* by Constable, but upon a scene by the riverside, in the full light of noonday, a scene truly typical of the England you love so well.

*The Haywain* was etched by H. Brunet-Debaines in 1884—with nicety of touch and depth of sympathy ; a well-known mezzotint, somewhat larger, was executed by Mr. J. B. Pratt in 1889. You cannot ramble long in London without seeing cheap prints, some good, some exceedingly bad and misleading, in the shop windows. I have sometimes felt, indeed, that we hardly realise our debt to the many artists whose works are copied in great numbers for sale in a thousand shops. It is one of the most remarkable phenomena of human life—this ability of one man to impart pleasure to many. Macaulay somewhere says that there is much less difference between one man and another than is commonly supposed ; but often the difference is so great that it would be difficult to exaggerate it. I will revert to *The Haywain* to point my meaning. Here is a small house beside a mill-stream, overshadowed by trees—a stream to which the farm men at times lead their horses to drink. The scene does not



essentially differ from many such in England. Week after week, month after month, year after year the spot has been passed unnoticed or looked upon with comparative indifference. But presently the neighbourhood is known to one who sees in it more than any man had seen before, and has, moreover, the power to depict what he sees. He sees the house of Willy Lott precisely as others see it, but with what different eyes :

Oh, the little more, and how much it is,  
And the little less, and what worlds away !

He sketches the scene ; he paints it—lovingly elaborates each detail of seeming triviality, patiently labours to—as Wordsworth puts it—“express what then he saw,” and wistfully, perchance prayerfully, yearns to leave to posterity such portraiture as shall be worthy of the scene as he had known and loved it. And now, after he has lain in the grave nearly seventy years, the fruits of that love and patience and wistful yearning are known to everybody who knows aught of landscape art in England, and to multitudes beside. On brightly coloured picture-cards *The Haywain*, as I well know, is pored upon by tiny folk ; the “angel of the house” places it in her album of treasured views ; the student copies it, or would fain do so ; I have heard even the “unlettered hind” praise its fidelity to Nature. The pleasure created and distributed by such a picture as *The Haywain* is perhaps greater than that derived from any other human source, excepting only a book which is at once great and popular.

Constable was nearing his end when he painted *A View of Willy Lott's House*, now better known as *The Valley Farm*. Of all his homeland pictures, *The Corn-*

*field* alone has been more widely appreciated than this ; perhaps no one of them was the outcome of so much observation and tentative effort. Constable sketched the subject from many standpoints, and his preliminary studies differed more essentially from the finished work than was usual with his landscapes. The oil sketch in the collection of the late James Orrock is from nearly the same standpoint as the picture, but on the right are shown some steps by the water-side ; a child sits on the topmost step, and a woman stands close by. But whereas, in the picture, three cows are in the stream, in the sketch two cows are crossing a wooden bridge ; and whereas, in the picture, the boat in the foreground contains a man and a girl, in the sketch it contains a man only. The oil sketch at South Kensington shows the house at a greater distance ; it lacks both bridge and cows, but shows a boat stern foremost. A further sketch, entitled *Landscape with Water*, also at South Kensington, shows the same house and surroundings from yet another standpoint. After all, *The Valley Farm* was exhibited in 1835 in an unfinished state ; even so, its merits were obvious, and it was warmly approved. At an earlier stage it had found favour in the eyes of Mr. Robert Vernon, who ultimately purchased it, bequeathing it to the National Gallery in 1847, so its worth has never been tested at public auction. In this picture, as Constable himself claimed, he kept his brightness without spottiness. "I have preserved God Almighty's daylight," he wrote, "which is enjoyed by all mankind, excepting only the lovers of old dirty canvas, perished pictures at a thousand guineas each. . . ." This "daylight" is still very noticeable in *The Valley Farm* ; it lurks between the trunks of the

trees, it gladdens the vicinity of the house; it broods upon the parted waters of the stream. The whole picture is restful to the eye; and if, as Winckelmann affirms, a majestic composure of attitude and expression is an attribute of the highest art, we must by analogy claim pre-eminent excellence for *The Valley Farm*. The picture has received much attention from the etcher's hand. It was etched by Mr. George Saunders in 1875, and by Mr. A. Brunet-Debaines in 1878; a much smaller line engraving is by Mr. J. C. Bentley.

A winding and ascending lane leads from Willy Lott's house to the village of East Bergholt, of which more anon. The lane commands fine views over the Stour Valley, from Manningtree to Dedham, and abounds with nooks and corners where, as Crabbe says, "the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil." The use of the word "sterile" shows how closely Crabbe had watched the wild flowers of his beloved Suffolk, for the bugloss is chiefly found on open patches near gateways, in gravel-pits or old quarries, and on heaps of refuse left neglected beside unfrequented pathways. Before reaching East Bergholt, the rambler should turn to the left, where a narrower lane will soon lead him to the spot immortalised by Constable's *Cornfield*. Concerning this spot there have been misunderstandings. I have already referred to the church tower included in the picture by artistic licence; moreover, *The Cornfield* has been incorrectly described as a view in Essex. Even Mr. Dutt has been led astray. "Go into the National Gallery," he writes, "and look at Constable's *Cornfield*, and you will see one of these Essex fields. In the foreground of the picture is a winding lane, beyond which the yellow corn is bathed in sunlight."



As a matter of fact, the winding lane and the cornfield beyond are both in Suffolk. Passing down the lane, you come to a spot which you may still identify as the scene of the picture. But much is altered. Some elms were felled long since, and the ditch on the left-hand side is dry ; but here, as in the picture, the lane turns sharply to the right, and looking over the hedge you see the fields between the lane and the Stour, but probably miss the figures of men—

The earth is quiet ; and far overhead  
All the blue altitudes of air are mute.

Those “altitudes” were blue indeed when I stood at the turning of the lane, looking down upon all that pleasant valley, where the river wanders among a litter of willows—so blue that I compared them with that “amethystine haze” of which Symonds writes in his “Sketches in Italy.”

*The Cornfield* was painted in the spring of 1826, and exhibited the same year at the Royal Academy. It fully justified Constable's claim expressed in a letter to Fisher—“the trees are more than usually studied, the extremities well defined, as well as the stems : they are shaken by a pleasant and healthful breeze at noon.” Unfortunately, the engravings from this famous picture are sometimes heavily over-printed, and the trees, upon which so much depends, have a solidity of blackness about them certainly not suggested by the original. The original has never lacked appreciation, despite the fact that it remained unsold. “The voice in my favour is universal,” wrote the artist, “it is my best picture.” We owe much to those few persons who, in 1837, purchased *The*

*Cornfield* from the artist's executors for three hundred guineas, and presented it to the nation. In all the catalogues of pictures in various collections, appended to Hazlitt's "Criticisms on Art" (2nd ed. 1856) only one work of Constable's is named—*The Cornfield*, No. 130 in the National Gallery. This picture may thus be regarded as the nucleus around which has gathered, in the course of years, that collection of masterpieces by Constable which now stands for so much in the eyes of many of our shrewdest critics of landscape art. To-day, *The Cornfield* hangs beside Ward's *Harlech Castle*, which, with its huge tree-trunk dominating the foreground, certainly suffers by proximity to the smaller picture.

Less broadly effective than *The Haywain*, perhaps less truly characteristic than *The Valley Farm*, *The Cornfield* is a work of many charming qualities. As Mr. Chamberlain says, "The sky is a fine piece of painting, full of movement, with its masses of white and grey clouds, and glimpses of bright blue." There is nothing tempestuous about it; Fuseli himself would hardly have deemed it necessary to raise his umbrella when going to view it, as he is said to have done on one occasion when bound for the Royal Academy, where Constable was exhibiting. But it reveals the artist's boldness in several ways. More jealously conventional, he would hardly have painted the sheep-boy prone on his belly, drinking from the brook; and would certainly have given fuller foliage to the nearest tree, which is almost bare of leaves—a feature also prominent in *The Valley Farm*. The sheep in the lane received some late touches from Constable's brush, for Chantrey saw the picture at Somerset House before the exhibition opened, and noticing dark shadows under

their tails, said they had "got the rot." This he endeavoured to rectify, but was not successful. He seems to have overlooked the fact that the time represented is noon, and that, owing to the disposition of the scene, the light comes almost exclusively from above. *The Cornfield* needed no re-touching by Chantrey, or anybody else.



## CHAPTER VI

### EAST BERGHOLT

IN a fair and pleasant Suffolk upland, where, in early summer, the eye rests upon every shade of green—from the tall profuse grass, ready for the reaper, to the growing corn, scarcely yellow—lies the village of East Bergholt, once a market town. It is not of normal English type. The English village, if truly typical, is closely disposed on either side of one main thoroughfare; the continuity of gable or dormer window is broken, here and there, by the projecting sign-board of the “Welcome,” or the “Red Lion”; the church stands at the village end, a stone’s-cast from the last inn. Beside the church stands the vicarage, perhaps the most comfortable house in the immediate neighbourhood. The Baptist Chapel, in red brick, a glaring architectural contrast, is in the heart of the village, where old Simon’s cottage was so recently pulled down.

They do things differently in East Bergholt. Here is a picture from the pen of a ready writer. “It seems to have been built to be painted . . . half the cottages in the village are so strikingly picturesque that it is difficult to believe that to look so is not the sole object of their existence; nestling in fragrant flower gardens, and with woodbine-garlanded porches, they suggest those picture-book cottages so pleasant to imagine and

hard to find." Moreover, the church is in the centre of the village, at the top of the lane leading to Flatford Mill. Near by stands the little post-office, close to the spot where stood "a substantial red-brick house," the early home of John Constable.

Golding Constable's house was demolished many years ago, but its lineaments live for us on the canvas of his son, and may be seen at South Kensington, and at the National Gallery of British Art. They tell you, in the village, that young Constable would at times resort to a small room—an attic over the post-office—where he could paint without interruption; we know, too, that he was welcome at Dunthorne's cottage hard by. But traces of Constable's early footsteps are hard to find; we know little beyond what is preserved in the Memoirs. The author of "In Quaint East Anglia," mentions a villager whose father ground colours for the artist, and whose uncle was the boy depicted in *The Cornfield*; but I never met this worthy, who also had stories to tell concerning paintings by Constable, long regarded with indifference by their owners.

East Bergholt is to-day the home of several artists whose work, well represented last year in the exhibition at Ipswich Art Gallery, has been deservedly praised. Their pictures are largely concerned with East Anglia; indeed, their fidelity to the homeland might have satisfied Borrow himself. But East Bergholt is no artist's village as the term is understood by tourists. Mr. Pennell found few memories of Millet at Barbizon; many boys had never heard the name of Millet; some even suggested that "Monsieur must mean Monsieur Millet le charbonnier"—perhaps as good a man as the artist; certainly

—from the utilitarian standpoint—quite as serviceable to his fellows at Barbizon and elsewhere. I am sure the reader might pass a week of idle hours at East Bergholt without hearing the name of Constable. But the name may catch his eye when he lingers in the church. In the south aisle a window is dedicated “To the glory of God and in memory of John Constable, R.A., born in this parish 1776, died 1837.” That is all, and what need of more? Better this brief memorial than such foolish inscriptions as frequently disgrace those sanctuaries where we lay our dead that never die. Better these few words than those, for instance, to the memory of Milton in Westminster Abbey, where, as the late Dean Farrar puts it, “We have one line about Milton, and four or five about the small official magnificences of Benson,” who erected the monument.

Constable sketched and painted much at East Bergholt. Many of his pictures of the immediate neighbourhood are at South Kensington. There is, I believe, no catalogue of these, and the following particulars may prove of service to the reader. In addition to the oil painting of Golding Constable’s house, already mentioned, there is one entitled *Near East Bergholt*; there are two oil sketches—a *View*, and a *Porch of East Bergholt Church*—a favourite subject. The latter is a powerful sketch, broadly suggestive, yet delineative in its treatment of stone-work; when standing near Willy Lott’s grave, with our faces towards the west, we can identify its standpoint. Of pencil sketches there are many; one, a large tree-piece, is laboured with great fidelity; two are views of Golding Constable’s house; four or five are drawings of some portion of the church—a



Perpendicular structure—which also forms the subject of six sketches in water-colour.

Folk tell strange stories concerning East Bergholt Church. One such bears a suspicious resemblance to a well-worn legend, repeated, with infinite variations, in widely separated parishes. It may be briefly summarised, after a matter-of-fact preamble. About the beginning of the fifteenth century it was deemed expedient to enlarge the church. The work of enlargement was spread over many years, in fact the fabric was modified and repeatedly added to during the following century. Such activities are common to all parish history ; the uncommon was yet to come. About 1525 the tower was commenced, but it never rose to more than half its projected height, and still stands a monument of incompletion. For the devil was much displeased when he heard of the tower that was to be, and determined to oppose its erection. What followed may be compared with the labours of Sisyphus or Penelope. Satan watched the progress of the work by day, and by night he destroyed what had been accomplished.\* In such case, the most industrious builders may well have wearied ; the work was abandoned in despair ; and five fine bells, designed for the belfry that was never built, were placed in a cage-like structure in the adjoining churchyard. Do you doubt the story ? If so, you should visit East Bergholt, where you will notice that the church tower is but an ivy-mantled fragment, and that a small bell-cote, placed at the west end of the nave, does duty for a belfry. Passing under what should have been the south doorway of the tower, you come presently to the

\* A similar story is told, for instance, at Tolleshunt Knights, in Essex.

curious bell-cage, formerly covered by thatch, but now by tiles. Peering between the lattice you see the great bells, substantial witnesses to the story, and sitting on the old altar-tomb close by, you perhaps ask yourself where fiction ends and fact begins. For the neighbourhood is conducive to contemplation, and to the feeling that "Time passeth away as a shadow"—a motto appropriately placed on the sun-dial over the south porch.

Three worthies, sometime rectors of East Bergholt, should be thought of ere we leave the precincts of the church. Fortunately, we are interested in each for widely diverse reasons, so may avoid repetitions. We will take them in the order of their going.

Robert Samuel was one of the Marian Martyrs. He was at Barfolde (*i.e.*, Bergholt) when "the evil days commenced." We read of him in the third of Foxe's folios,\* and portions of the narrative are very curious. The garrulous old chronicler writes of Samuel as "a very godly and right faithful preacher of God's Word," a minister whose sermons were worthy of high admiration. Two long letters from his pen have been preserved; one an exhortation to patience under affliction, the other, hardly so interesting, is known as the faith of Robert Samuel. In the light of his subsequent sufferings, the first words of the exhortation read almost as an inspired prophecy. "A man knoweth not his time; but as the fish is taken with the angle, and as the birds are caught

\* The works of Foxe have an interest in East Anglian eyes, apart from their worth as records. They were printed and published by John Day, who was born at Dunwich, died at Saffron Walden, and has a window to his memory, by the Stationers' Company of London, in the church at Little Bradley in Suffolk. Day, who had suffered exile as a Protestant, was the only printer of his day who used Anglo-Saxon characters.

with the snare, even so are men caught and taken in the perilous time, when it cometh upon them. The time cometh; the day draweth near (Ezek. 7). Better it were to die, as the preacher saith, than to live and see the miserable works which are done under the sun; such sudden and strange mutations, such woeful, heinous, and lamentable divisions so fast approacheth, and none or very few thoroughly repenteth. . . . Woe be unto these false elusions of the world, baits of perdition, hooks of the devil, which have so shamefully deceived and seduced full many from the right path unto the Lord, into the highways of confusion and perpetual perdition." Those perilous times foreseen by him arrived, and he was thrown into prison, first at Ipswich, and then at Norwich. In prison he saw visions. On one occasion, a shining visitant stood before him, and exclaimed, "Samuel, Samuel, be of good cheer, and take a good heart unto thee; for after this day shalt thou never be either hungry or thirsty." At another time, he saw in his sleep three ladders set up towards Heaven; one was longer than the rest, yet it seemed to Samuel, as he dreamed, that they all met at the top. A fanciful interpretation tells us that this dream foreshadowed the martyrdom of Samuel, and of two women who perished shortly afterwards, the three martyrs, like those three ladders, meeting in Heaven at last!

Robert Samuel was burnt at Ipswich on August 18, 1555. As he was going towards the spot, as the story runs, a certain maid threw her arms about his neck and kissed him. The action was construed to her disadvantage; she was marked for a refractory heretic, and threatened with imprisonment and burning. But she



hid herself in the town, and "escaped their fiery hands." After the burning of Samuel, it was noised abroad, by some that stood by on the occasion, that the martyr's body shone "bright and white as new-tried silver." Doubtless those were days of great excitement, and not all the exaggerations of contemporary history were the outcome of intentional untruth—which should be borne in mind when consulting the pages of Foxe, who must be read with caution.

William Jones (1561–1636) was rector of East Bergholt forty-four years, and a monument to his memory is on the north wall of the chancel. We do not, I think, know much about him. Like so many ecclesiastics, he was an author and commentator. In 1636 was published his commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to Philemon and the Hebrews, and on the First and Second Epistles of St. John. The dust of neglect is now deep on this folio, as on so many others concerned with kindred topics; but the work was formerly well known, and Laud was charged with having mutilated it to suit his prejudices. It consists of lectures, which Spurgeon found "very lively, sprightly and colloquial." Jones, however, was a strong partisan, who did not regard Dissenters as persecuted folk, but compared them to the thieving money-changers whom Christ whipped out of the Temple. I thought, as I lingered in the church where he was wont to preach, that I should like to meet the staunch old churchman face to face, and to hear him discourse, with unctuous fervour, on the blessings of an unquestioning conformity, and the evils that await on such as haunt conventicles. Like his great contemporary, Jeremy Taylor, he was careful for holy

dying as for holy living, and having preached for many years on the conduct of life, he wrote a treatise showing how a Godly Christian might best make his last will and testament.

It is a far cry from Jones to Dr. Durand Rhudde, whose name bulks largely in the life of Constable. At the rectory, Dr. Rhudde was sometimes visited by his grand-daughter Maria, whose father, Charles Bicknell, was Solicitor to the Admiralty. Here at East Bergholt, about the year 1800, Constable met Maria Bicknell, and the acquaintance soon ripened into something deeper than friendship. Some ten years passed, however, before any definite idea of marriage was broached to others, and, owing to opposition from Miss Bicknell's relatives, it was yet five years more ere, on October 2, 1816, the two were wedded at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. This opposition came largely from Dr. Rhudde, who had remembered Maria very generously when making his will, but was expected to renounce her if she married Constable—a second son, and an almost penniless nobody in the eyes of the rector. Meantime, the lovers corresponded with charming frankness; their letters, printed in the *Memoirs*, provide ample proof of their mutual good sense. Dr. Rhudde—we may be quite frank a century after the event—hardly seems to have known his own mind in this matter. Once, hearing that Constable had been permitted to visit Maria, in her father's home at Spring Gardens, he wrote so violent a letter that his grand-daughter trembled on hearing it read in part—in fact, he declared she was no longer any relative of his. On another occasion, after the marriage, he said at the rectory that he would delight to receive husband and



WILLY LOTT'S HOUSE.





wife if they called upon him ; later on, we learn that Mr. and Mrs. Constable are to visit East Bergholt : " If they do," exclaimed the doctor, " and call upon me, I will not see them." Finally, however, resentment died down, and when, in 1819, the rector died too, he bequeathed to his grand-daughter a legacy of four thousand pounds. Rhudde was a Cambridge man, and was sometime Chaplain to the King.

The bell of St. Mary's Abbey was announcing some customary service as I left the church, to seek rest and refreshment at an inn. At such times, I am often thankful for the comfort, even for the comparative luxury, of the average wayside house in England. For, a Rambler myself, I love to read of the rambles of others, and my reading has persuaded me that one may travel in England with the minimum of privation and discomfort. I have never met with filth, or squalor, or incivility comparable to the experiences of men who ramble farther abroad. I have never sojourned at an inn where " with a glass, a whang of bread, and an iron fork, the table is completely laid " ; where the floor was of earth ; where the sow wandered freely about the house ; or where the one bedchamber was shared by adult strangers of both sexes ; all of which luxuries were enjoyed by Stevenson at the *auberge* of Bouchet St. Nicholas. I have never considered new-laid eggs or good butter as rare luxuries, but as such you may read of them in Mr. Henry James's studied prose, for they were once placed before him in the ancient city of Bourg-en-Bresse. Nor—unlike Mr. Joseph Pennell—have I visited inns where I received no attention save stares, or where, having eaten my supper on the kitchen table, by the

light of a candle, I was presently shown into a small closet that did duty for a bedroom, and promised a towel in the morning! Perhaps I am more fortunate than others; perhaps—to twist a citation to my purpose—the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; and I ought to say, in the words of Byron and with a more grateful heart, “this, it should seem, was not reserved for me.” ’Tis an old theme, this discomfort of travellers; worn threadbare a century back. It behoves every man of us to set down our more cheerful experiences, and to show the brighter side of the picture.

At the inn at East Bergholt I passed a pleasant hour. I dined; I chatted with the good folk of the house; I turned over a collection of photographs from Constable’s landscapes, and of scenes in Constable’s country; I pored upon my map, and I envied no man. Congenial surroundings should improve the flavour of food. Boswell, I will answer for it, never before tasted such veal as lay on the table at Mr. Dilly’s in the Poultry, when Johnson met Jack Wilkes; and we know that on the day when Hazlitt first saw Coleridge, in the wainscoted parlour at Wem, “the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips. . . had the finest flavour imaginable.” Moreover, I overheard much chatter at the bar, and am always grateful for those tributary rivulets of local talk that do so much to swell the larger streams of information. We should never forget, when we visit an inn, that the pot-boy probably knows the neighbourhood far better than we.

There was chatter enough presently, when I pursued my journey across the fields, and pausing at a gateway, looked down upon Stratford St. Mary in the hollow



below. A man rode up jerkily on a small, sturdy horse, and talked for so long that I began to think we might never part. Seldom have I met another man so deeply sun-burnt. His face and neck were the colour of an old folio, and were marked, moreover, by the "colonial spot" seldom acquired save under excessive exposure in the open fields. Such exposure he had known, almost daily, for many years; he farmed, he told me, some six hundred acres. He always loved to be in the thick of the fray, in seed-time and in harvest. He expressed views which I was surprised, yet pleased, to hear. He spoke lightly of agricultural depression, "most of the men, and some of the masters, dislike hard work, and there's an end of half the subject." If only he could get decent men—"such men as I knew when I was a boy in Berkshire!" It was hard, at the best of times, to find the men one wanted; but now it is almost impossible. "Why, look at this wheat! Look at the straw, man: feel those grains—there's no better corn in Mark Lane, and there never will be." But the devil of it was he could find so few men; the wheat should have been lifted and away a week back, and now—well, he had to work like a nigger himself. He admitted that, in other industries, there was great scarcity of work, but thought the cause clear as noonday. "Look here, Sir. For fifty years we've been boasting of the increasing perfection of our machinery; we talk of labour-saving appliances; our one aim is to produce the greatest quantity of goods with the least possible outlay for wages, and we follow this course with increasing success; we do a great trade, but employ few men in the doing of it. And now we shake our heads over declining industries,

and bemoan the surprising lack of employment ; was ever such nonsense talked before ? ”

I can convey no impression of the raciness, nor of the dry humour of this man's talk. He talked with rapidity, and with facility of allusion and wealth of fact and figure which were surprising. Every now and again he urged his horse forward for a few paces, and presently brought him back to the old position beside the gate ; and every glance round whetted his appetite for discourse, and strengthened his convictions. He made brief raids into the borderland of many topics ; but invariably returned to matters fiscal, which he had studied with avidity in the newspapers. He thought some form of Protection might be good for us all ; in fact, a scheme, rich with the promise of usefulness, lay cut and dried in his own mind. But he would hear nothing of Colonial Preference. “ Sir, it won't do. The argument don't hold together. First, they wanted to help the English farmer, who was down on his luck, and who couldn't make money out of corn because he was undersold by the foreigners. But nothing they are likely to do will bring me one pennyworth of benefit. Why, if you don't buy corn grown in my field, what do I care whose field it grew in ? I may as well be undersold by one man as another. What use to tax the Russian if you help the Canadian to cut me out ? ”

Well, here was much good “ copy ” for a newspaper. My friend, I fancy, has by this time felt the pangs of disappointment. For he watched me with interest as I took notes of his talk ; he guessed, correctly, that I scribbled on occasion ; but he further divined that I was walking around in Suffolk for some newspaper in

town ; he promised to look for my "column or two," and I permitted him to ride away undeceived. It was long ere I was finally quit of him, or he of me. For several times, as I followed slowly the footpath towards Stratford St. Mary, he rode up again to say something that he had forgotten, or to shake me by the hand once more. I learned neither his name nor that of his farm. Probably this record will never meet his eye. Should it do so, he will own, I think, that I have written of him not unkindly.

My pen is at the bottom of a page,  
Which being finished, here the story ends.

The reader may find, in the pages of Byron, the two lines necessary to complete the quotation ; they are derogatory to an author's sense of importance, and I will not add them here. The Suffolk farmer, if he reads this narrative, may laugh good-humouredly ; he should at least smile as he remembers our encounter in the fields, and the figures we cut.



## CHAPTER VII

### STRATFORD ST. MARY

I PASSED down into Stratford St. Mary in the light of the setting sun. I had lost much time with my friend, the cheerful farmer, and wondered, as I caught a first glimpse of the church among the trees, how best to compensate my deficiency of leisure. A plan was soon formed. I would go straight to that church ; if possible, I would ascend its tower ; I would retire early and rise with the lark. It is sometimes good to chronicle a resolution ; it is better when one can add that the resolution was honoured, not in the breach, but the observance.

As it chanced, the first man I met was the sexton. His calling, as one of the brotherhood told his helper, at the grave where Hamlet moralised, is the oldest in the world ; whether earl or ploughman we require his offices at the last. But the sexton often follows more callings than one, for—to vary Henley's phrase—" even a *sexton* has to dine," and, like other folk, he needs the where-withal. I gathered that the sexton at Stratford St. Mary was no exception to the rule ; but his confessions were uttered *sub rosa*, and I must not betray confidences. We walked together in the little graveyard, in the red of evening, and he pointed out the headstone to the memory of Anne Richardson, who died in 1803, aged sixty-six. She was the last remaining daughter of

Samuel Richardson the novelist, whose portrait, one of several by Highmore, hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, where we see him in his wig and ruffles, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and buckle-shoes; looking every inch a parson, which he never was, and very proud of his own performances, which, indeed, he never wearied of discussing.

Of Anne Richardson little is known. To think of her is to think of a generation far different from ours. She was one of several daughters. Strictly brought up by her mother, Richardson's second wife, she addressed her father as "Honour'd sir," and, as a child, seldom saw him save at table. The home in which she passed many of her younger days has long been famous. In Mr. Arnold Glover's edition of "Boswell's Life of Johnson" there is an excellent drawing of this old house, "now known as No. 111 (formerly No. 49), The Grange, North End Road, Fulham." A part of it was Richardson's country home from 1739\* till the autumn of 1754, when he removed to Parson's Green. Anne was therefore a toddling child when the family settled at North End Road. The house, not till long afterwards known as The Grange, was for many years the home of Sir E. Burne-Jones. In the drawing referred to we see a large, flat-faced residence, with many windows, all alike; protected by tall, wrought-iron fence and gates. In Richardson's day it was spoken of as being near Hammer-smith turnpike, and was then quite remote from the

\* *Vide* "Samuel Richardson," by Austin Dobson. In his "Eighteenth Century Vignettes," however, Mr. Dobson says that Richardson lived here from 1730 or earlier; but, in the absence of proof, I have taken the date named in this more recent book as probably correct.

noise and business of London. Anne survived her father more than forty years. She had copied for him many of his innumerable letters ; these copies, together with the letters received in reply, are preserved in the Forster Collection at South Kensington. We read of Anne's illness during the progress of the " History of Sir Charles Grandison " ; the first four volumes of that interminable romance were published when the tenancy of the North End home was nearing its close. Indeed, she was not robust, and her health caused much anxiety to her parents. She was never married.

Anne Richardson did not greatly interest the sexton at Stratford, and he turned about with willingness when I suggested that we should see the surrounding country from the tower battlements. So together we trod the recurring round of the steep steps in the tower angle ; groping our way in the gloom, our hands upon the guiding rope, our footfalls causing strange echoes. More nervous folk might have come to a sorry pass ; for presently a bat, startled at our approach, darted here and there in noisy excitement, and even when we had left it far below we heard its shrill voice chiding us for the interruption. We came out upon the tower-top in the nick of time ; half an hour later we could have distinguished few features below us in the gathering gloom. But there, to the north-east, stretched the fields where I had loitered in the afternoon ; there, far to the left, the tower at Stoke-by-Nayland looked down upon many miles of rolling pasture- and corn-land ; behind us, the Stour divided the scene between Stratford and Langham. I recognised the truth of words which I had lately read. " Supposing the visitor enters Suffolk from the south, by the old



coach road, once, in part, a Roman road, crossing the Stour at Stratford St. Mary, he does so in the immediate neighbourhood of some of the loveliest scenery in the county." Indeed, from the church tower at Stratford, or from those at Dedham or Langham, the view over the Stour valley is extensive, as will be supposed; but only those who have overlooked it from such an eminence can realise its commanding beauties. From the tower at Langham, one of many views of the Vale of Dedham was painted by Constable; and in his brief remarks on his *Summer Morning*, one of the "English Landscape" series, he wrote, "This view of the beautiful valley of the Stour . . . is taken from Langham, an elevated spot to the N.W. of Dedham, where the elegance of the tower of Dedham Church is seen to much advantage, being opposed to a branch of the sea at Harwich, where this meandering river loses itself." Particular scenes, however, evoke widely differing opinions of their merit. Stevenson once started to ramble in the Stour valley, but soon returned, partly by reason of a sore heel, but also because he had found it "not singularly pretty on the road."

"In part, a Roman road." Ah, those Roman roads! What memories, or shall I say what fancies, they inspire? The Roman strove to render every part of his immense territories easy of access, whether for transit of goods or for personal travel, and during his domination of our island home he left his mark upon highway and byway; he planned and perfected many thoroughfares which we still tread. Two routes mentioned in Antonine's "Itinerary," No. 5 and No. 9, traversed Suffolk; and Stratford St. Mary has been identified with the station *Ad Ansam*, on the latter route. The name, it has been

suggested, was from the low Latin *ansaria*, signifying market produce, and a British market, memorialised by Chipping Hill in this parish, perhaps suggested the application of the word.\* The name, as regards popular use, was probably short-lived, and some variant of Stratford would soon be employed, as more closely applicable to a spot where the *street ford* crossed the river. Stratford, unlike so many villages in England, was never perhaps much larger than it is to-day; but it certainly knew more bustle and stir when the stage-coach drew up near the bridge, on its journey from London to Ipswich, or from Ipswich to London. They were the events of the day, the arrival and departure of the coach, with its astonishing assortment of luggage and curiously contrasted passengers—old women and infants; snuffy old fogies and pert or timid misses. We know, from a thousand records, how oddly they were sometimes suited, and how fiercely, on occasion, they quarrelled by the way. Mr. Outram Tristram has written of them with a running pen; Mr. Hugh Thomson has drawn them with admirable skill; and they live for us, more vividly than many bygones, in the pages of “Coaching Days and Coaching Ways.”

Stranger sights than the passing of the coach were seen upon this old highway, very many years ago. For the men of Suffolk and Norfolk reared turkeys for the London markets in astonishing numbers, and used to send them thither in droves. Defoe, when rambling in East Anglia, was told by a Stratford man that each drove numbered from three hundred to a thousand birds, and that, in one season, as many as three hundred droves had passed

\* Raven's “History of Suffolk.”

into Essex by way of Stratford Bridge. Other droves passed the Stour at Clare or Sudbury ; geese were sent also ; and Defoe was assured that more birds went yearly to London from Suffolk, and the southern half of Norfolk, than from all the rest of England. The journey must have been long and tedious ; the geese usually started on their long walk in August, for the corn harvests were then for the most part over, and the birds could feed among the stubble as they went. Sometimes, however, both turkeys and geese travelled in specially contrived carts. Defoe's words, as a picture of the past, are worth quoting : " Besides the methods of driving these creatures on foot, they have of late also invented a new method of carriage, being carts formed on purpose, with four stories or stages to put the creatures in one above another, by which invention one cart will carry a very great number ; and for the smoother going they drive with two horses abreast, like a coach, so quartering the road for the ease of the gentry that thus ride. Changing horses, they travel night and day, so that they bring the fowls seventy, eighty or one hundred miles in two days and one night. The horses in this new-fashioned voiture go two abreast, as above, but no perch below, as in a coach, but they are fastened together by a piece of wood lying crosswise upon their necks, by which they are kept even and together, and the driver sits on the top of the cart like as in the public carriages for the army, &c." In this, as in so much else, the old order changeth. The appearance of a large drove of turkeys on Stratford Bridge would now furnish a topic for copious discussion ; and farmers in Essex and Suffolk would thence foretell the return of the good old days.



All days are good or evil, according to the point of view. Those were evil days in the eyes of churchgoers in Suffolk, when Cromwell ruled; and one William Dowsing, who lived awhile in this pleasant village, earned much unenviable notoriety as an iconoclast. Despite a deal of careful research, his is a shadowy figure in the avenue of time; for our knowledge of him is largely derived from a narrative by his own hand, which has been much garbled. He was one of a family at Laxfield, where, as the register shows, he was baptized on May 2, 1596, and buried on March 14, 1679.\* His career affords a striking illustration of the old adage that extremes always meet. The ecclesiastical rigidity of Laud led to the Puritanical violence of his immediate successors. Laud had done his work so thoroughly that "the Bishops of several extensive dioceses were able to report to him that not a single dissenter was to be found within their jurisdiction." This was in 1639; yet so rapid was the whirligig of politico-religious opinion that in 1643 an Ordinance was passed which proved disastrous to all the externals of that worship so zealously fostered by Laud. The Earl of Manchester, as General of the Associated Eastern Counties, employed Dowsing to visit the chapels and churches of Suffolk, and to destroy crucifixes, altars, statues, pictures—in short, almost everything which he deemed superstitious. Dowsing went to this work with relish. The destruction was largely accomplished during the early part of 1644; we read that one hundred and fifty buildings were visited in fifty days.

\* The article on Dowsing in the "Dict. Nat. Biography," questions both these dates, as also Dowsing's burial at Laxfield; I do not know upon what grounds.

Those buildings bore the marks of that visitation for many years ; for no light hands were laid upon them. I have already mentioned how, at Clare, Dowsing found " 1000 superstitious pictures " ; at Stoke-by-Nayland, close to Stratford, he and his zealots " brake down an 100 superstitious pictures ; and took up 7 superstitious inscriptions on the gravestones." Moreover, insult was added to injury, for the unwelcome visitors usually demanded from the churchwardens a fee of 6s. 8d. for their services !

These and similar doings were recorded by Dowsing in a Journal, apparently written as he moved from place to place. The Journal was bought by Huse, a bookseller in London, in 1704 ; it has, so far as we know, long since been lost. But it was transcribed, at least in part, by Robert Loder, a printer and antiquary of some note in Suffolk, and was published at Woodbridge. I am not partial to forms and ceremonies ; nor to crucifixes and pictures, whether " superstitious " or not, in places of worship ; but I try, at times, to stand in other men's shoes, and can sympathise with one who wrote of Dowsing as a " portentious clown, of whom the bitterest Puritan of the present day is probably ashamed." Singularly enough, as we may note in passing, a Dowsing, from the same village of Laxfield, was instrumental in the burning of John Noyes in the reign of Mary. Isaac D'Israeli, in his " Curiosities of Literature," likens Dowsing to a fanatical Quixote, who despoiled many cathedral saints of their noses, and mentions that Hall, when Bishop of Norwich, removed the heads from the figures in his chapel windows and thereby preserved them. He asserts, too, that the figures with heads of

white glass, occasionally seen in churches, are due to a similar cause.

I cannot say what damage was done by Dowsing in Stratford Church. His Journal is not at my elbow, and probably few men now in the village ever heard his name. The church is largely Perpendicular, with fine aisle-windows characteristic of the period; but the chancel is Decorated. It contains features of interest—a Jacobean altar-table; the arms of the Black Prince in stained glass; some Latin inscriptions on the exterior of the north aisle. Like the tower, the clerestory and aisles are battlemented; but the plain sloping roof at the west end of the nave mars the effect of the whole. A few ancient memorials have survived the hand of time, and that of the restorer; but they are not of historic importance.

Rain fell in the night, but the sun shone brightly betimes next morning, and the country folk were thankful for the needed shower. Their corn, they told me, was for the most part off the land, and rain was sadly wanted by the gardener. Larks sang freely as I approached Stratford Mill, shaking out their notes in a sort of triumph; the scene, from their point of view, was doubtless sufficiently inspiring—the winding river; the willows that shook the rain-drops from their leaves; the lusty youngsters that met me near the mill, with spikes of purple loosestrife drooping from their gathered pinafores; the cattle that strayed on the distant uplands, where deep shadows from the clouds moved slowly, like infantry passing along the sky-line. The mill, it need hardly be said, is not that painted by Constable and engraved by Lucas. "Though much is taken,



much abides"; but the old mills, so faithfully depicted by many English artists of the older schools, are for the most part gone. Their very site is at times forgotten; sometimes, as here at Stratford, and at Dedham hard by, it is marked by a far larger structure in brick, which can hardly, by the exercise of the most consummate art, do duty for a picture. The old water-wheel, and part of the mill itself, are seen on the left of Constable's picture; a barge floats on the limpid water in the middle distance; there are willows, living and dead, disposed about the centre, and a group of boys—"young Waltonians" Lucas called them—are fishing in the foreground. Constable told the engraver how, when water reaches the root-tips of the willow, the tree perishes, and the dead tree at the Stour's edge illustrates the fact. The mill is gone; but we may follow the Stour as it winds towards Nayland Lock, as I shall presently do, and may still see how faithfully Constable, in a score of large pictures, caught the hue and tints of water, sedge, and flower, even of the earth itself. In these matters of detail his efforts were indeed unwearying. When at Petworth, near the close of his life, he not only sketched before breakfast, but collected bits of lichen-freckled bark, richly coloured feathers, and portions of earth or sand. The true artist, be he painter or poet, never despises trifles.

Near Stratford Mill, on the Essex side of the Stour, stands a small red-tiled cottage. It is at the parting of the ways, which points you to Ipswich, or Colchester, or Dedham, as inclination or business prompts. Near by a steep ascent has proved difficult to generations of man and beast; and the occupant of that

cottage has placed some salutary advice above his doorway :

Rest drivers, rest on this steep hill,  
Dumb beasts pray use with all good will,  
Goad not, scourge not, with thonged whips,  
Let not one curse escape your lips.

The merciful man is merciful to his beast. I would rather be the man (or the woman) who placed those lines where they might catch the eye, than the inn-keeper whom Stevenson blessed—because he had provided a goad, contrived with devilish ingenuity, wherewith his guest might urge the mouse-coloured Modestine upon her way.

Any road, as Carlyle tells us, will lead anywhere. A turning near Stratford Bridge will lead you, after various divagations, to the church at Langham, where you will know yourself in the neighbourhood of the Glebe Farm, now so greatly altered. Constable loved the scenery hereabouts for its own sake, as well as for its commanding outlook over the Vale of Dedham. He loved its associations too; for Fisher, staunchest of friends, who afterwards became Bishop of Salisbury, was Rector of Langham; his nephew John, familiar to us as Archdeacon Fisher, was at school with the artist. The Glebe Farm was close to the Early English Church of St. Mary. The picture so entitled now hangs, as I have said, in the National Gallery, and has peculiar claims upon our attention; for Constable told Leslie that it was one of the pictures upon which he rested his "little pretensions to futurity." It has many merits. It shows a lane winding between well-wooded banks; the gabled farm-house, embowered among trees, is on



THE HAY WAIN.





the right ; behind it rises the tower of Langham Church. A sketch of the scene, almost identical in disposition, hangs beneath the finished picture. The picture was chosen, among others, to represent the artist's work at Worcester. The same subject was engraved by Lucas for the "English Landscape" series of plates ; but the prints were so dark that the half-tones were merged in the general blackness, and greatly disappointed Constable. A *Glebe Farm* is also at the Louvre (1810). This I have not seen ; but it depicts, I believe, essentially the same scene as those in the National Gallery : "Au milieu des arbres on aperçoit le clocher de l'église de Langham."

The neighbourhood, like that of Flatford Mill, has appealed to other artists. A view at Langham—I forget the exact title—very lovely in colour and striking in subject, was recently exhibited in Cheapside. But Constable's *Glebe Farm*—the one best known to us—is unique, as he foresaw it would be ; it has charms which no other landscape, however similar in subject, "can utterly abolish or destroy." As he once observed : "The world is wide ; no two days are alike, nor even two hours, neither were there ever two leaves of a tree alike since the creation of the world ; and the genuine productions of Art, like those of Nature, are all distinct from each other." The *Glebe Farm* was painted about the same time as *The Cornfield* (1826) ; it was exhibited in 1827. According to Appendix I. to Lord Windsor's "John Constable," it was offered for sale in 1863, and bought in for £819 ; in 1888 it was bequeathed to the nation by Miss Constable. The *Glebe Farm* bought by Messrs. Agnew in 1876 was a smaller picture.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BOXTED AND NAYLAND

I HAD loitered in Stratford St. Mary till evening was already far advanced, and it was dusk ere I approached Boxted. It was Bank Holiday—a fact of which I was unpleasantly reminded. Nowhere could I find a bed for the night. I passed few inns on my way to Boxted, and those few were full. At the last one, on a hilltop, the good lady of the house came forward to explain the situation with profuse apologies. On Bank Holidays all the folk round about received visits from sons and daughters who lived in London, or elsewhere far away ; “ I doubt,” added she, “ if there is a bed to spare for miles round.” So I turned once again into the growing darkness. I walked for some distance on the road to Colchester, thereby getting farther from Boxted, where I had hoped to sleep. Coming presently to an inn, I heard violent scuffling in the bar, and much unsavoury language. So I knocked at a neighbouring cottage, and was again told that “ nowheres about here ” was there a room to spare. To shorten a long story, I merely record that I walked, for nearly four hours, from village to village, and that at length, at an inn near Boxted Church, where I had been refused earlier in the evening, I prevailed upon the hostess to accommodate me for the night.



That hostess was the embodiment of civility, and presently, as I sat at supper, an explanation was offered. Her good man had suffered much in the past from the rough horse-play of trippers from Colchester, Ipswich and elsewhere—so much so that host and hostess had long since decided to receive no strangers when either was from home. Mine host had that morning driven to Colchester, and had not yet returned, so my reception at the second time of asking was an unusual favour, for which I was thankful. I gathered after a while that chance visitors had probably robbed this worthy pair of their due, for some lines that faced me on the wall seemed to say as much :

Since man to man is so unjust,  
No man can tell whom he can trust.  
I have trusted many to my sorrow,  
So pay to-day and trust to-morrow.

How cosy they are—these little parlours in wayside inns ! The friendly ejaculations of the wag-at-the-wall clock ; the brightly coloured almanacs ; the large pictures taken from the London weeklies, portraying a fashionable wedding, or some hair-breadth escapes in the imminent deadly breaches of Afghanistan or the Transvaal ; the huge shells and faded photographs on the mantelboard ; the quaintly contrived map of England, worked in coloured threads by the daughter of the house ; the well-rubbed Windsor chairs ; the likeness of Beaconsfield or Gladstone that looks down upon you serenely as you sit at meat. And then the one small row of books in the recess—"The Prince of the House of David," "Marmion," "The Lamplighter," "Queechy," "Sandford and Merton," "The Pilgrim's

Progress," "The Saint's Everlasting Rest." They are all old friends. May they yet live long in the land!

I was abroad early next morning, for even at tiny, retired Boxted the builder is busy, and soon after sunrise the clink of the trowel was too persistent to permit of sleep. So I sauntered around the village in the fresh morning air, finding little of historic interest, but a fine view over the valley of the Stour, with the tall tower of Stoke-by-Nayland in the far distance. That tower, one hundred and twenty feet high, is conspicuous for many miles around. I had seen it from the battlements of Stratford St. Mary Church, and knew its aspect, long before, from Constable's *View at Stoke-by-Nayland*, an oil sketch at South Kensington. Of this church Constable wrote: "The length of the nave, with its continuous line of embattled parapet, and its finely proportioned chancel, may challenge the admiration of the architect, as well as its majestic tower, which from its commanding height may be said to impart a portion of its own dignity to the surrounding country."

Later in the morning, I went to see the "little Norman church" of St. Peter at Boxted, a much altered structure, with low, massive tower, and a large dormer window projecting from the roof of the nave on the south side. In the graveyard stands no headstone of note; but the church shows several interesting memorials and a huge oak chest in the vestry, which has seen many parsons come and go. There is a tablet to Mrs. Sarah Bridges, who died in 1777; "though she lived in the latter days her wisdom and piety would have adorned the purest ages of the church." A strange encomium, as we perceive, clearly enough, if we trouble to reflect. For in

every age live pious souls who think they have fallen upon evil times ; it is always the " latter days," and we think, with many twinges of conscience, of the purer orthodoxy of our fathers. Perhaps, as things theological are going, our sons in turn will regard us as stalwarts of a fast-waning but sounder theology than their own, and the Higher Critic of one generation may be the orthodox pattern of another. Good Mrs. Bridges had lived through the days of Doddridge and Newton and Cowper ; she may have listened to Horsley or Romaine, to Law or Wesley. What was wrong then, with the Gospel, or its expounders or hearers, that writers of epitaphs should bemoan those " latter days " ?

A monument in the chancel at Boxted is of interest to literary folk. It bears an inscription in Latin to the memory of Sir Richard Blackmore and his wife. Blackmore, as readers may remember, was a dull writer honoured with the name of poet. He wrote a prodigious quantity of verse, and more epics than any other English bard except Southey ; for which reason Pope, in the " Dunciad," styles him the " everlasting Blackmore." His name suggests many memories. Johnson did more than justice to the poet when, as he tells us in his " Life of Watts," he recommended Blackmore's inclusion in the " Most Eminent English Poets." Like many another poet long since forgotten, Blackmore enjoyed considerable vogue in his day. He commenced poet in earnest when, in 1695, he published " Prince Arthur," in ten books, of which three editions were sold in two years. He did not always enjoy such sales. Of his " Eliza"—another long heroic—Johnson records that he had never met with a quotation or allusion to it, and



adds that he borrowed the only copy he ever saw when he wrote the *Life* of its author. "The Creation," a philosophical poem in seven books, was more widely read. Published in 1712, it is perhaps Blackmore's best work. It was warmly commended by Addison, who alluded to it in the *Spectator* (No. 339). It was praised, too, by Steele, who, in No. 6 of the same journal, while the poem was still in the making, wrote of its author's good sense and virtue. Blackmore, however, was to feel the sting of Steele's wit, for his poem "Advice to a Weaver of Tapestry," was ridiculed by the essayist in the *Tatler*.

Blackmore also essayed to expound the Scriptures. Does the reader possess that weighty folio, published in 1700, in which Blackmore paraphrases the Book of Job, the 3rd chapter of Habakkuk, and other select portions? If he does, and has never found time to read it—a plausible conjecture—he may turn, for an opinion of its merits, to another shelf. He may take down "Commenting and Commentaries," by C. H. Spurgeon, and there find a characteristic comment on the literary and spiritual merits of Blackmore's folio: "Grandiose poetry. The worthy knight is not the worst of the poetical expositors, but he is bad enough." The paraphrase aroused the ire of Dryden, who, as Johnson puts it, was Blackmore's professed adversary, and lived long enough to ridicule him in a prologue, and to set the wits of Will's coffee-house laughing at "quack Maurus." Johnson treats Blackmore, in the *Life*, with more respect than may have been expected at his hands, for once, in the presence of Boswell, Steevens and Tyers, he said that the critics had done Blackmore too much honour by writing so continuously against him. Nor did the

Doctor think much of the poet's originality ; for he told the same friends that "The Creation" contained lines by Phillips, Tickell and others, and had thus been "made out." Phillips himself assured Draper the bookseller that the poem had been so much amended as hardly to contain thirty consecutive lines as originally penned by Blackmore. Reading between the lines of Johnson's brief account of the poet, we see, I think, that Blackmore was admired by his biographer for his morals rather than for his poetry or prose. The two men held many views in common. Both thought lightly of players ; both looked askance at Swift ; both were zealous Churchmen.

I might mention other volumes from Blackmore's pen, now almost entirely forgotten. Their author, whose monument here at Boxted is seldom visited for his memory's sake, was for some years in residence at Oxford, and studied medicine at Padua. Later, he lived in Cheapside, and was a Fellow of the College of Physicians ; he retired to Boxted in 1722. For a time, he enjoyed a large practice ; but this, like his literary reputation, waned in his later days. When he no longer had many patients to cure he wrote books instructing them how to cure themselves, and wrote so many that Johnson doubted if he could enumerate them all. In 1697 he was appointed a Physician in Ordinary to the King ; and was knighted. On July 30, 1714, he was hastily summoned, with Arbuthnot and others, to consult upon the condition of Queen Anne, who died on the following Sunday. It is recorded that his end was peaceful. He had been engaged upon a work entitled "The Accomplished Preacher ; or, an Essay upon Divine Eloquence," but was taken ill before its

publication, and died on October 8, 1729. During his illness he was visited by White, the parson of Nayland, who afterwards published his friend's book, and left a record of the piety of its author. It would be difficult to name an equally voluminous author whose works are so uniformly neglected. His name is kept in memory by the sneer of Pope, the allusions of Addison and Steele, and the *Life* by Johnson. Outside, the great light of August was almost intolerable after the gloom of the church, and the landscape swam before me as I looked westward. The old caretaker to whom I returned the huge key of the south door was obviously surprised when I expressed an interest in Blackmore's monument. She seemed, however, proud of her position as door-keeper in the house of her God. I gave her a photograph of the church, and the old lady was so delighted that she at once placed it among her treasures on the bureau. It was a justifiable carrying of coals to Newcastle, for she assured me she had seen no photograph like it before.

Boxted suggests a passing allusion to the Dedham Classis. The members held their fourth meeting here, on March 4, 1582-1583. The speaker for the occasion was Anthony Morse; the moderator, Richard Dowe. Morse lived at Stratford (? St. Mary); as did also Dowe. Morse was evidently highly esteemed, for, although he held no benefice or recognised pastorate, he "accepted of a calling" to minister to the household of Sir Drew Drury, and it was no mean distinction for such a man to act as speaker at a meeting of the Classis. Dowe, as we learn from Neale's "*History of the Puritans*," was suspended, in 1575, by Bishop Freke. He was an active



member of the Classis—a man of whom we catch interesting glimpses in the Minute Book. Previous to the meeting at Boxted, the Classis had foregathered at Stratford, when Dowe brought up an important question for consideration : “Whether a man divorced from his first wife justly and marrying a second should retain the second as his wife.” The question was left to be determined when they met at Boxted. I quote the “finding” from the Dedham Minute Book, only modernising the spelling. “It was concluded that the Word of God alloweth that a man justly divorced from his first wife might marry a second, so his proceeding to the second marriage be orderly and in the Lord.” On another occasion, Dowe was prominent in an attempt to prohibit dancing round the May-pole, but the attempt was not successful ; and once, when the Classis met at Wenham, he asked what could be done touching a wicked man, who, as was commonly known, beat his wife. Could such be received to the Communion without public confession of his fault ? These, perhaps, are but trivial records of a local worthy ; but they have only recently been published abroad, and some dweller at Boxted may read them here for the first time.

Ecclesiastical memories of much older date are associated with Little Horksley, a village close to Boxted, where once stood a Priory of Cluniac monks, founded in the reign of Henry I. A house near the church stands on the Priory site. The church itself is ancient ; it is the resting-place of many Swynbornes, who lived in the Hall hard by. They lived so long ago that some mutilated effigies of carved oak, thought to date from the twelfth century, are also thought to represent members of the

family. Other effigies, in plate armour, are those of Sir Robert Swynborne and Sir Thomas his son ; they repose under a wonderfully wrought triple canopy, with crocketed pinnacles.\* But I did not turn aside in my ramble to visit Little Horksley, which lies some three miles southwards from Nayland, whither I was bound. Since leaving Stratford St. Mary, my route had kept me in Essex, but Suffolk was almost continuously in sight, and a beautiful view of the county stretched before me as I loitered among the cornfields that look down upon the Stour. Reaping machines were busy among the yellow acres ; these, and the sight of other agricultural implements, reminded me of Jefferies. For in "Notes on Landscape Painting," Jefferies writes of those who, when they depict landscape scenery on canvas, purposely omit such objects as steam-ploughs and reaping machines. He contends that they are wrong, and I think the contention just. Constable seldom if ever erred in this way. He is homely as Morland. He gives us the windmill, the farm-cart, the plough, the barge ; he would, we may feel sure, have depicted the steam-plough and the reaping machine had he known them.

On the road from Boxted to Nayland I saw innumerable harebells. Has the reader noticed how frequently they grow in numbers beside the upland road or lane, where we might suppose so fragile a plant would perish ? We might, rather, expect to find them in sheltered corners of lowland meadows, where passing winds are tempered to the shorn lamb, and the feeble flies find refuge from the storm and stress of higher lands. But the harebell

\* *Vide* Durrant's "Essex."

grows plentifully in exposed situations, and although it soon withers in the hand it seems impervious to the driving rain. Presently a footpath led me across meadows to a lock upon the Stour, near the wooden bridge that parts Essex from Suffolk. It was a typical English scene—the falling water, flashing in the sunlight; the tall flowering rushes in mid-stream; the green arrow-heads; the boats under the shadow of the willows; the cattle grazing in the adjacent fields; the merry voices of youngsters fishing—with very primitive tackle—for gudgeons; just such “young Waltonians” as Constable painted in his *Stratford Mill*. Before me, as I rested beside the stream, stretched the scattered village of Nayland, its pinnacled church tower peeping between trees. There is a mood of placid content not easy to describe—a mood in which you almost lose all idea of individuality, seeming to be rather part and parcel of your environment, a mood experienced (if I read the narrative rightly) by Stevenson, during his inland voyage upon the Oise from Compiègne towards Verberie. At such times, if thoughts of God arise, we remember, perhaps, those lines by Coleridge which so aptly voice the aspirations of many :

It may indeed be phantasy when I  
Essay to draw from all created things  
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings ;  
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie  
Lessons of love and earnest piety. . . .  
So will I build my altar in the fields,  
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,  
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields  
Shall be the incense I will yield to thee,  
Thee only God ! and thou shalt not despise  
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.



I was on foot again betimes, and entered Nayland by way of Abel Bridge. A clothier named Abel was the reputed builder of the church, and his tomb is in the south wall; perhaps he also built the bridge that bears his name. An old native, with whom I chatted by the riverside, knew nothing of Abel; but he knew much concerning the Nayland of more recent times. From the river he had taken many perch, roach, dace, gudgeons and small jack. He boasted of his captures, as was the wont of anglers even before the days of their master Izaak, and could "call to mind" roach weighing one and a half pounds each. He knew men who had caught jack "well over eight pounds," but had personally known no such luck, for his heaviest fish had weighed but three. He made the humiliating confession with obvious reluctance, and was glad to turn to other topics. We sauntered into the town together. He pointed out The Butcher's Arms, where a cask, sawn in half longwise, does duty for a sign; and an old, red-tiled cottage opposite, bearing a shield, and the inscription "L. I. H. 1690." More picturesque are the cottages that line the back-wash from Nayland Mill. The water is spanned by slender footbridges of brick, with timber hand-rails; I saw the scarlet water-iris in bloom beneath, and "flowers of all hues" in the narrow strips of garden between the doorways and the bridges. Near by stands the huge brick mill, long since disused; on either side of the door are two mill-stones, brought years ago from Higham, when the oil mill there was burnt. Many such stones are now used as doorsteps by country folk. Outside the mill stood a Nayland patriarch who had charge of its machinery thirty years ago. He could remember when



THE VALLEY FARM.





thirty loads of wheat, mostly grown in the neighbourhood, had stood together outside the mill, awaiting their turn to discharge. He had seen a hundred sacks unloaded before breakfast, and could remember when fourteen hundred sacks of flour were sent in one week to London. In those days, thirty gangs (pairs) of barges plied between Mistley and Sudbury; there are now but three. Nayland Mill was bought, some years back, for conversion into a leather factory; but it proved too large, and a smaller building near by was utilised instead, in which, as my old friend affirmed, three hundred girls had sometimes worked together.

Presently we reached a far different topic. As a boy, John had worked in the Red Barn at Polstead, and was in the neighbourhood when it was burnt down. Need I say that we were both thinking of that perennially interesting topic, the story of Maria Martin and the Red Barn? Polstead is a small, scattered village in the valley of the Box, close to Nayland. There, not far from the church, you may still see a small cottage, once the home of Maria Martin. Her story, so often repeated with contradictory details, has been recently summarised in "Highways and Byways in East Anglia," and it is hard coming after Mr. Dutt. But the subject cannot be ignored in the neighbourhood of Polstead—nor, indeed, anywhere in Suffolk, as every East Anglian knows. So well worn a story may be dismissed in a few sentences. Those already acquainted with it may take the advice of Chaucer. They may turn over the page, and read another tale.

In 1827, there lived at Polstead a mole-catcher named Martin. His daughter, Maria, was foolishly partial to

a young man named William Corder. The two lovers were accustomed to meet in a barn belonging to Corder's father. Even this fact has interested many, and once, when staying at an inn at Long Melford, I was shown a print entitled *Maria Martin's First Visit to the Red Barn*. Now Corder represented that his parents considered the alliance undesirable; so a plan was secretly concocted whereby the marriage might be furthered. Maria, dressed as a man, was to meet Corder at the Red Barn; there she was to change her clothes, and the pair would journey to Ipswich, and be married. Accordingly, Maria left her home shortly afterwards, and was never again seen alive by her parents. Only a few days later Corder was met by Maria's stepmother, who naturally inquired as to the young woman's whereabouts. Corder told her that Maria was at Ipswich, and that he had arranged to marry her soon. He remained at Polstead many weeks, repeating the same story from time to time; then he suddenly left, stating that the marriage, after all, would be at Yarmouth. To Yarmouth, however, Corder did not go; but he went to London. Letters reached the Martins, stating that the marriage had taken place, and that the couple were living in town. But Mrs. Martin had a strange experience, which led to stranger results. Three times—as the story runs—she dreamed that Maria's body lay under a particular spot in the Red Barn. Search was made, and the body found exactly where Mrs. Martin had seen it in dreams. Corder was arrested in London, tried at Bury St. Edmunds, ultimately confessed that he had murdered Maria, and was hanged for his crime. The whole story is sufficiently gruesome to have engaged the attention of strolling

players, and many a town in England has witnessed a crude drama founded on these facts, and usually entitled *Maria Martin and the Red Barn; or, Murder Will Out*. As a youngster, I myself witnessed it at St. Alban's; and have seen it placarded here and there in the course of rambles in several counties. Many a time have I heard the story from the lips of an old lady of sterling character, who dearly loved to recite it before an appreciative if small audience. From her I can hear it no more, for she lies in the little churchyard at Colgate, in sunny Sussex.

I am wandering from Nayland; but who can resist an old story? Is it not old stories that appeal to us again, as we turn from the mill-stream and the street, and enter the ancient parish church? For the church of St. Stephen at Nayland, Constable painted his second altar-piece, a half-figure, beneath which might appropriately be written, "He took the cup and gave thanks." Painted in 1809, the picture, as Lord Windsor thinks, proves that Constable had profited by his recent study of Reynolds, for he had been copying some of the master's works for Lord Dysart. But the piece has been much criticised, and most connoisseurs agree that Constable was wise to abandon such subjects. Not the least severe of his critics was an uncle, David Watts, who, singularly enough, calls it fine as a whole, but gives twenty-five reasons to prove it bad! This picture of Christ still hangs under the "large, luminous window," which, as Watts thought, greatly prejudices it; but it appealed to me more forcibly than I expected. I think, with Mr. Brock-Arnold, that the general effect is pleasing; but do not quite appreciate his remark that



the execution is "very slight." Slight it undoubtedly is, but the question is one of degree, and Constable was probably anxious not to labour such a subject unduly. The picture had suffered much from damp; but was restored in 1880, and now bears few traces of deterioration. Above, figured in stained glass on the window, are the Stoning of Stephen, the Infant Christ in the Manger, the Bearing of the Cross, the Descent from the Cross, and the Ascension.

In the chancel, a tablet perpetuates the memory of the Rev. William Jones, A.M. Jones was a divine whose acquaintance was deemed an honour. He was a staunch Trinitarian and High Churchman, who had been Rector of Paston in Northamptonshire. He became Perpetual Curate of Nayland in 1777, and gathered around him a body of sympathisers who had much influence as High Churchmen after his death. He was also, for a time, Chaplain to Horne, Bishop of Norwich, whose life he wrote, and whose collected writings he published in 1795. Jones was himself a versatile author. He wrote on the Hutchinsonian theology, on the "Scholar Armed," on Natural Philosophy, and a Tractate on the Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, which Newman read with profit, as he tells us in his "Apologia." Jones died in 1800; his works, in twelve volumes, were published the following year, with a Life by Steevens, and have frequently been reprinted. He is remembered, too, as the instigator of the *British Critic*, which first appeared in 1793, under the editorship of Archdeacon Nares and another. The *British Critic* was the spokesman of the High Anglicans; it appeared regularly until 1843. In the Fairchild Discourse, in 1784, Jones uttered some wise words, which

may fittingly close this chapter: "The world cannot show us a more exalted character than that of a truly religious philosopher, who delights to turn all things to the glory of God; who, in the objects of his sight, derives improvement to his mind; and, in the glass of things temporal, sees the image of things spiritual."

## CHAPTER IX

### BURES ST. MARY

To saunter from Nayland towards Bures St. Mary is to see the face of a quiet, pastoral country—so quiet that you may probably meet no man until you reach the Flemish cottage, at the corner of the lane that leads to Wiston Church. In August, the hedges are bright with yellow toad-flax; red champions look bravely from the bank, as they do in so many English counties; the common mallow, sometimes a ruddy purple, sometimes a nearly pure dark blue, strews the roadside with its scattered companies. I started from Nayland early in the afternoon, after some hindrance from yet another gossip, a man who knew almost everybody for miles around, as I guessed from the tenor of his discourse. Nor did we part until he had accompanied me some distance on my way; for he was anxious lest I should miss my road to the old Flemish cottage.

These Flemish cottages are a feature of interest in East Anglia. Heavily thatched, or, as at Dedham, roofed with thick tiles, and of massive timbers that might have served for a man-of-war, they are of great strength, or they would not have weathered so many storms. Inside, the beams sometimes bear curious carving; without, the walls are often faced with plaster or stucco, on which is embossed some design typical of the calling



of their long-forgotten inmates, or some mark of more august significance, such as a mitre or crown. Like the Dutch cottages still standing on Canvey Island, not so many miles away, these old homes of the Fleming in Suffolk have evoked much interest, and in many neighbourhoods you may hear circumstantial stories touching their former inhabitants, who are usually credited with having built or at least adorned them with their own hands. Those stories must be received with caution. Broadly speaking, one explanation is usually offered. The cottages were the homes of Flemish refugees, most of whom were weavers, and all of whom had fled from their own country to avoid religious persecution. All this is in part true, but the topic is too interesting for such summary dismissal.

The Flemish immigrant may be traced, in the pages of East Anglian history, at very early periods. We learn of him in Corporation Records and Subsidy Rolls. In the days of Richard III., to go no farther back, more than three hundred aliens, mostly Flemings, were known to the tax-gatherer in Suffolk; but it appears that few such were in the county a century earlier. At no period was there a large proportion of weavers amongst them. They followed many trades; they brewed beer, they carved in wood, they made bricks—in particular, they made a broadly fashioned shoe which gradually displaced those longer ones so familiar to us in old illustrations. But, although so frequently spoken of collectively as weavers, we know, on the contrary, that the weaver, often enough an alien, was comparatively seldom a Fleming. Those industrious makers of East Anglian cloth, so frequently mentioned in local hand-books,

came mostly from other lands than Flanders. One record of a Suffolk clothmaker tells us that he employed twelve aliens, all from Italy; in Ipswich, in 1485, there were seventy-seven Flemings, twenty-five of whom followed the brewing industry alone; in short, it is more correct to speak of the Fleming as a shoemaker or a brewer than as a weaver. At an earlier period, there were only five Flemish weavers in the whole county. That many alien weavers lived and worked in Suffolk is well known; but the "weaver's cottage" has often no claim to be regarded as the old home of a Flemish refugee.\*

Of the Suffolk weaver, however, we get a reliable glimpse during the reign of Henry VIII. Then, as now, the weaver had to contend with the competition of "the wretched foreigner," amongst whom he probably classed his own relatives whom he had wisely or unwisely deserted. A time came when political unrest gave rise to stagnation in trade, and merchants in London and other centres were charged with an almost criminal abstention from purchase. The weavers of southern Suffolk made common cause with men of other crafts, and of the gathering of four thousand such sufferers, from many towns and villages, we read in the pages of Hall—a serviceable chronicler, who wrote of things seen and heard in his own day. The men were met by statesmen anxious to pacify rather than to punish. The Duke of Norfolk, in particular, was friendly towards them; and Wolsey went so far as to soundly rate the London merchants for their growing neglect of the weavers'

\* *Vide, e.g., Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, New Series, vol. xvi.*

wares. He urged that the weaver brought his wares to market at great cost ; he was willing to sell, and the merchant should be as willing to buy ! “ I tell you,” he said, “ that the King straitly commandeth you to buy their cloths as beforetime you have been accustomed to do, upon pain of his high displeasure.” Wolsey, indeed, knew more than he wished concerning the true causes of poverty in Suffolk. He had sought means whereby he might replenish the King’s exhausted coffers ; extra taxes were devised ; but the mutterings of discontent were followed by open rioting, and the scheme had to be abandoned. The incident is well summarised in the late Bishop Creighton’s “ Cardinal Wolsey.”

“ This, all this, was in the olden time, long ago.” So long ago that only they who browse among old books ever think of those troublous days, and the weaver of four centuries back, whether Flemish or East Anglian, would be forgotten in the very village where he once laboured were it not for these cottages of quaint structure, so tenaciously regarded as monuments of his handiwork. The mere framework of these cottages is not always attributed to the weaver’s industry ; but the carved panelling so often seen on the walls, and other decorations, internal and external, are pointed to as his. What stories some of these old homes could tell ! What sadness and joy have they not witnessed—what tender wooing and tearful parting, what scenes of childish play, what daily totterings of age ! To-day, they are mostly picturesque ; half-hidden in village by-ways ; embowered among trees ; standing alone beside the stream or in the neighbourhood of quiet lanes ; or, it may be, huddled together in a quadrangle, as at Dedham, or in



narrow courtways, as in some of the larger towns in Suffolk. I could take the reader to "Flemish cottages" in each of the situations mentioned; perhaps that near Nayland is as typical a specimen as any. Of large size, its timbers are wonderfully preserved, and the carved panelling on its walls is appreciated by its present inmate, as I was assured by an old man who eyed me furtively as I scribbled under the shadow of an adjacent tree.

That tree afforded a welcome respite from the heat. Seldom have I been abroad on a more sultry afternoon. Was it wholly my fancy, or did the blue butterflies frolic less nimbly than usual over the wild parsleys? So quiet was it that I felt like one wandering in the land of the lotus eaters, a land where "all things always seem the same." After leaving the Flemish cottage, I strayed from the Bures road, coming at length to the little church at Wiston, close beside the Stour. Dating from Norman days, and still retaining proofs of its antiquity, it is now largely modern. The south porch is recent; and a bell-cote is the only substitute for a tower; the headstones in the graveyard bear testimony to the singular piety of bygone generations at Wiston. There is little to note in the immediate vicinity of the church; so I presently retraced my steps, coming at length to The Fox, on a hill-side overlooking the river and the lowland country south-east of Bures. My way thence led me near Smallbridge Hall, one of those stately homes of England which often gather around them such interesting associations, and which, however modernised externally, by additional wing or tower, are yet substantially the same home that sheltered generations of English men and women through days more turbulent than ours. The parish church,

the old inn, the Hall ; it is here that history is writ large ; the modern chronicler, if he neglected these, would often have little enough to record.

Queen Elizabeth, according to topographical chroniclers, must have slept in an astonishing number of houses. She travelled frequently from place to place, especially within a hundred miles of London, and undoubtedly visited many of the larger residences between Hatfield and Norwich. Such a residence was Smallbridge Hall, where Elizabeth was certainly entertained both in 1561 and 1579. On the former occasion, as we learn from a Cottonian MS. in the British Museum, she stayed at Smallbridge for two days, and the expenses of her entertainment were on a par with those incurred at Kenilworth, when she visited the Earl of Leicester. For the MS. records that the sum spent on that occasion was nearly, in present-day value, £2500. The Hall, modified from time to time, is now a farm-house ; but it still retains Elizabethan features. It was long the home of the Waldegraves, whom we can trace, at a very early period, at Walgrave in Northamptonshire. Many years ago the family passed from Suffolk into Essex, leaving monuments to their memory in the church of St. Mary at Bures, near their old home.

To trace a Waldegrave of great repute is to look back to a very distant period in our island story. A Richard Waldegrave, who lived and died at Smallbridge, was a Knight of the Shire in a Parliament which earned a somewhat unpleasant notoriety, for it deprived the villeins of many respites and privileges which, to further peace in the realm, had been granted to them when Wat Tyler and his followers had so loudly

voiced their grievances. Sir Richard was elected Speaker of the House, and it stands recorded, or is at least affirmed, that he is the only Speaker known to English history who ever requested the King to relieve him from his office—a request which was not granted.

Sir Richard Waldegrave died on May 2, 1402, and was buried on the north side of the church at Bures. I found the church locked, so could not seek his tomb, but as I peered through a window I saw a monument to the memory of another Waldegrave, with an inscription so curious that I copied the whole :

HERE LIETHE BURIEDE SIR WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE KNIGHT  
AND DAME ELIZABETH HIS WIFE WHO LIVED TOGETHER IN  
GODLYE MARRIAGE 21 YEARE AND HAD ISWE 6 SONNES AND  
4 DAUGHTERS THE SAID ELIZABETHE DEPARTED THIS LIFE  
THE TENTH DAIE OF MAYE IN THE YEARE OF OUR LORDE  
GOD 1581 AND THE SAIDE SIR WILLIAM DECEASED THE FIRST  
DAIE OF AUGUST IN THE YEARE OF OURE LORD GOD 1613.

I learned, however, that several brasses and inscriptions have been destroyed, so valuable records of local worthies have probably perished. The inscription which I copied is on the south of the chancel, in the Chantry Chapel, founded by the Waldegraves themselves, where masses were said for the repose of their departed. On the side of the altar-tomb facing the chancel, a scene, familiar to all who visit old churches, is depicted. For there are Sir William and Dame Elizabeth, kneeling as in prayer ; with their six “sonnes” and four daughters close by.

At Bures, the ancestors of John Constable first settled as farmers in Suffolk. We find, I believe, no trace of them here until we meet with the name of Golding Abram Constable, a son of Sir Marmaduke Constable



of Everingham. A daughter of this Golding married her cousin John, likewise a resident at Bures ; she became the mother of another Golding Constable, who by-and-by removed to East Bergholt, married Ann Watts, and was an excellent father to a greater son. A copy of an inscription in Bures Church was sent to Constable's son, John Charles, in 1839 ; this, however, as Lord Windsor points out, is somewhat puzzling. For the inscription memorialises a Hugh Constable of Bures, who died in 1713, aged forty-eight, and Anne his wife, who died in 1739 ; it also gives the names of their children, but the name of Golding does not appear. There seems no doubt, however, that Golding Abram was great-grandfather to John the artist, and that his ancestors were Lords of Flamborough in the days of Richard I.

The church at Bures stands in the centre of the village, at the parting of the ways, and close to the bridge across the Stour. The massive tower, battlemented and pinnacled, is almost covered with ivy on its southern side ; the churchyard adjoins the vicarage grounds. Much of the structure is seven centuries old ; and to linger under its shadow is to find oneself wondering what manner of folk came hither to pray so long ago. But, as a matter of fact, the materials for a history of Bures are very meagre, and even those meagre materials are largely based on stories associated with monumental relics in the church. The arched and canopied recess, on the north side of the tower exterior, has the figure of a fish above it, and is thought to be the founder's tomb. According to an entry in a register, the tower was once surmounted by a spire or fleche ; this, in 1733, was destroyed by lightning, and five bells (there were

and are six in all) were melted in the fervent heat. Perhaps the most curious relic of the past is the effigy, in chestnut-wood, of a knight with two angels at his head, and a lion sejant at his feet. The story runs that this worthy was a Cornard ; that he sold Corn Hall for fourpence during the reign of Henry III., and was roundly cursed by the monks (? of Bury) for his share in the transaction. The sequel affords yet another instance of the tendency of similar legends to crop up in different places. Poor Cornard was threatened with curses whether buried in the church or in the churchyard, so elected to lie in the wall itself, thus being neither inside nor outside of the sanctuary ! Almost the exact counterpart of this legend is told at Brent Pelham in Hertfordshire, where one Piers Shonkes, a famous slayer of serpents, was buried in an altar-tomb in the church wall, thereby avoiding the jurisdiction of Satan, as he firmly believed.\*

According to Samuel Lewis—whose “Topographical Dictionary of England” it is difficult to praise too highly—the village of Bures comprised, early in the nineteenth century, some thirteen hundred souls. That it once shared in the activities of the weaving industries is probable enough ; probably, too, it shared the depression in trade so keenly felt, two centuries back, in many towns and villages of Suffolk. At that time, the neighbouring town of Sudbury was said to be remarkable for one reason only : it was “very populous and very poor.” The villages naturally shared in the prosperity or poverty of the nearest towns, to which they carried their goods for sale ; and when we read that the number of poor in

\* *Vide* the writer's “Highways and Byways in Hertfordshire,” chap. xiv.

Sudbury was "almost ready to eat up the rich," we must conclude that this destitution was also felt at Bures and elsewhere. To-day, the chief signs of trade with the outer world are the piles of bark by the roadside, and the large tannery near the church, where many hands are kept busy. In the adjoining suburb, called Bures Hamlet, on the Essex side of the river, malt and bricks are made ; but I listened to complaints of declining trade, and here, as elsewhere, the palmy days are always past.



## CHAPTER X

### THE CHAPEL IN THE CORN

I HAD some pleasant talk with a barber in Bures. He carried with him that perpetual recommendation, a cheerful countenance, and, whilst interested in matters parochial, he had the sense to keep in touch with the outer world. This, in the main, he contrived to do by an assiduous study of the papers, both political and comic, after the manner of all orthodox barbers; but also, as I surmised, by much judicious questioning of clients. The latter, at least, is a practice to be commended. "He that questioneth much," says Bacon, "shall learn much, and content much." In this case I asked the questions, and the barber of Bures was prodigal of replies. Our talk, as was natural enough, turned largely on local antiquities. There was one spot, it seemed, visited by every wise man and woman when they came to Bures, and I was straitly charged to visit it also. Whatever else I missed, or however anxious I might be to reach Sudbury, I must turn aside to see "the chapel in the corn."

So I turned aside; and after idling awhile in the tannery, where I admired the adroitness with which hand-barrows were wheeled on the very edge of the pits—

Nor brain did reel, nor foot did slip,  
Nor any hand did falter there—

I climbed the hill to the north of Bures, and came presently to a footpath through the cornfields. The spot commanded a noble prospect of the surrounding country; the wheat harvest, not yet "safely gathered in," was in full progress in many fields, and the hum of machinery filled the air. I had strayed half a mile from the high road when I suddenly rounded a corner and found myself in an open space where men were piling straw. An old barn stood near by. I had reached the shrine I sought. This old barn, as a man promptly explained, was the chapel in the corn, usually referred to as "Chapel Barn."

It is a strange structure, somewhat similar to the barn-like chapel of St. Peter's-on-the-Wall which you may see from the mouth of the Blackwater, or to the Spital Farm at Maldon; and strange indeed is the story that has gathered around it. That story takes us back to a past which is exceeding dim—so dim that we can see with difficulty, and can but guess at the lineaments of the picture. From the barn itself we can learn little, albeit we readily perceive that long ago it was a small, duly furnished church. The foundations of the walls may still be traced; the piscina remains in the wall itself, and Early English windows, long since bricked up, show its approximate age. Old timbers are still in the roof; on the south side I saw the traces of what was once a doorway; outside, on the north, a large round stone between two windows is thought to be all that remains of a sun-dial. The whole building is now thatched, and has evidently been enlarged from time to time; but so massive is this old structure that it is surely destined to retain traces of its once sacred character

even in a century yet to dawn. This church, so strangely altered that the chaffcutter sounds where priests once chanted, was built, as tradition states, by Abbot Samson of Bury St. Edmunds, probably near the end of the twelfth century.

"Abbot Samson," wrote Carlyle, "built many useful, many pious edifices ; human dwellings, churches, church-steeples, barns—all fallen now and vanished, but useful while they stood." I do not know whether Carlyle ever visited this ruin on the hillside near Bures ; but if he did so I can, I think, guess his thoughts as he lingered on the spot. For, as he would have known, this relic—half barn, half church, so typical of that meeting of Past and Present which he wrote of with such burning eloquence—is the supplanter of a far older structure, an ancient church of wood, built, as we are asked to believe, on the spot where Edmund, afterwards known as Edmund the Martyr, received the crown from the East Angles, on December 25, in the year 855. He was then but a youth, having been born between fourteen and fifteen years before.

One of the oldest authorities for this statement is the chronicle of Gaufridus de Fontibus, who, however, lived long after the events which he narrates. Those events did not happen until Bede—an invaluable historian when not concerned with the miraculous—had been dead more than a century, so we are left to conjecture where we would fain know. Much that has been written of Edmund is mythical. I am here only concerned with the tradition that he was crowned on the site of Chapel Barn. The tradition is the more perplexing because, as was pointed out a few years ago by the



Vicar of Bures, "there is absolutely no reference to this chapel in any of the parish papers, so it is probable that the building had no connection with the village near which it stands." Moreover, a hill near by bears the name of St. Edmund's; but it retains no traces of any commemorative ruins, and Mr. Hamlet Watling, an antiquarian whose opinion carries weight, believes the hill was named in error.

The chronicle of Gaufridus de Fontibus dates from early in the twelfth century. In that chronicle we read that Edmund was crowned at *Burum* by the prelate Humbert; the description given of the spot is precise, and the oft-repeated assertion that Edmund was crowned at Burne in Lincolnshire seems far less plausible. For Gaufridus, as though anxious to prevent any mistake, records that *Burum* was a village in Suffolk, that it was situate on the river Stour, at the "known bound between East-sex and Suffolk." That Edmund was crowned on Christmas Day 855, by Humbert, then Bishop of Elmham, is also stated by Asser. So we have documentary evidence, of great antiquity, to support the assertion that Edmund was crowned at Bures, which is more than we can claim on behalf of many stories very generally believed. But the older chroniclers and historians were wont to dispense with the word "near," or its equivalent, usually naming a spot from an adjacent town or village, and Gaufridus, even if he knew the exact place where the King was crowned, would naturally write of it as *Burum*, perhaps familiar to him as a mere huddle of herdsmen's huts by the riverside. East Anglians hardly need reminding how many incidents, stated to have occurred at Norwich, or Ipswich, or Bury

St. Edmunds, in reality took place some miles from those centres.

An old man passed in and out of the barn as I examined its walls. He had lived close by for many years, he could hardly say just how many! Ever since he could remember travellers had turned aside to visit Chapel Barn; he supposed most of them were idle, rich folk with plenty of time to spare, or why did they waste hours looking at an old place like this! Nothing in it was of any use. He couldn't make things out at all. Why was it that people who came from great places far away—places like London, now, or Birmingham—always spent most time in looking at buildings that were no good for anything—buildings partly rotted away or fallen down, years before *they* were born! He had heard that the monks—rare men for their feed, weren't they, sir?—used to say masses in Chapel Barn long before his grandfather was born, so it might perhaps be when the Romans were over here, as he had heard tell! “Why, 'ere's the door what they used to come in at, and 'ere's one of the windows what they used to look out at, to see if any robbers were about in the fields, for the robbers used to take their wine whenever they could.” He supposed, from all he heard, and from picture-books he had seen, that the monks, for the most part, had a good time of it; but why did they go about dressed like women? And did they never do any work at all, or was it true, as he had been told, that they did all the work in the houses where they lived, and did a lot of gardening as well? Such questions have been asked by other and far more learned men, and have elicited conflicting replies.

He pottered about feebly as he spoke ; his amazement at the curiosity of visitors was often repeated, and was obviously genuine. The ruin in which he worked, and which he looked upon daily with indifference, was to him a relic of ancient days. He knew nothing of any earlier building on the same spot. In this, indeed, he was even as other men ; for nothing is known concerning the church first erected here. We can only surmise that it was built soon after the death of Edmund, when veneration for his memory was spreading everywhere in East Anglia. The men of Suffolk have always claimed that he was slain at Hoxne, beside the river Waveney, and close to Eye, where you may still see the cross of stone that marks the site of St. Edmund's Oak, which fell in 1848. To that oak, according to tradition, the King was bound by his Danish captors ; there he was mercilessly scourged ; there arrows were shot into his extremities ; and there, when the torturers wearied of their play, an arrow was driven through his heart. Persons had doubted the story, foolish unbelievers as they were, but some of them lived to blush for their unbelief. For when that old oak fell it was carefully examined ; plainly discernible were the evidences of a thousand years of growth, and lo ! some five feet from the ground, the point of an arrow was embedded in the trunk.\* The many stories regarding the body of the King—how it was carried to the little timber chapel hard by, and finally rested at *Beodric's-worth*, afterwards called Bury St. Edmund's—hardly concern us here. The "timber chapel" near Hoxne and the one erected on the "royal hill" at Bures were

\* This statement, quoted in Mr. Dutt's "Suffolk," was published by the *Bury Post* on October 11, 1848.



probably enough similar to that so wonderfully preserved at Greenstead, close to Ongar in Essex, where trunks, presumably of oak, stand side by side and form the walls of the nave—they are thought to have stood thus for eleven hundred years, and to be an entirely unique monument of their kind. To this church the body of Edmund is said to have once been temporarily removed.

In the parish papers of Bures, as I have said, there is no allusion to Chapel Barn. We could wish that some monkish chronicler had busied himself, in a neighbouring scriptorium, with the annals of Bures. Such tasks must often have seemed wearisome, and profitless to boot; but we cherish those old chronicles now, and wish them far more numerous. It is said, I know, that we write too much; that we record where we should act. But is not the man of letters also a man of action? Is not the act of writing as serviceable as the act of slaying—or the compiling of contemporary records as honourable a vocation as the seizing of another man's territory? Some of us, at least, regret the meagreness of local records. The annals of village life hardly exist. England is dotted from east to west, and from north to south, with villages concerning which we know almost nothing—so thankless a task is it to keep a diary; to write down, day after day, a narrative of events apparently trivial, but perhaps pregnant with meaning in the light of the future. We have a Master of the Rolls and a Public Record Office; I should like to think it possible to support a Public Chronicler in every parish, who should set down, for the use of posterity, a narrative of things seen and done. Such a Public Chronicle should be more circumstantial than any existing Parish Register;



THE CORNFIELD.





those Registers are often excellent, so far as they go ; but their keeper is a man of many duties, and we may wonder they are ever kept at all. Many a village tradesman is sufficiently educated to fill such an office ; a small portion of each day would suffice for the task—a task which he would gladly perform for £50 a year. The records of a year would lie in one large volume ; a hundred such volumes—the chronicles of a century—would fill but a few shelves in the vestry of the Parish Church, or the office of the County Police. Thus might each village boast its own Matthew Paris, who did good service in the Benedictine Monastery at St. Albans, or its Jocelin of Brakelond, “ a certain old St. Edmundsbury Monk and Boswell, now seven centuries old.”

Seven centuries have passed since this chapel was consecrated, doubtless with much ceremony ; set apart for the service of God, and the Virgin, and saints, and the whole hierarchy of Heaven as venerated by mediæval ecclesiasticism. Here would come monks from Bury St. Edmunds, or it may be from Sudbury, to assist or watch such ceremonial as many would now deem mere monkish mummery. As a cell, perhaps, to that monastery, once so populous, on the eastern slope of Bury St. Edmunds, this chapel was naturally the scene of Romish practices ; but we are apt to forget that almost the same might be said of every ancient church in England. As I listened to the chatter of that old man—now lingering in the gloom of the barn, now in the bright sunshine without—I asked myself why the theology and ritual of Rome should have rooted in our land so deeply that they still grow with surprising vigour. Divines may insist on the “ historic continuity ” of the

Church of England ; but to do so is largely to deny our Protestantism. The authority of the Pope has been resisted in every reign. The bishops resisted Augustine ; a Northumbrian Witan defied Pope Agatho I., and burned his letters ; Dunstan defied John XII. in the matter of Edwy's marriage ; William the Conqueror refused homage to Alexander II. ; John waged a long warfare with Innocent III., and had only himself to thank for his ultimate humiliation in regard to Langton ; Edward III. used very defiant language in his letter to Clement VI. touching certain moneys demanded by that Pontiff. But to deny the Pope's authority was not to repudiate the beliefs and practices of his Church, and the prayers that ascended daily from this chapel in the fields differed little from those offered in other sanctuaries, unconnected with any neighbouring monastery, but under the direct supervision of an English bishop. "The Church of England," wrote Freeman, "is the daughter of the Church of Rome." If any man questions this, let him pore upon our old chroniclers ; let him follow our ecclesiastical history from Bede to Cranmer ; above all, let him visit those old, ruinous churches so thickly scattered over England, and ask whether their relics are relics of Romanism, or of a simpler and more Scriptural religion. Surely the question can receive but one reply, for it is concerned with facts. Far different, far more difficult to answer, is the question asked above. Let us vary the words. Let us ask, Why was our belief like unto the belief of Rome—say for nine centuries, from Augustine to Pole ? Chapel Barn, at least, is "eloquent of still replies."

## CHAPTER XI

### SUDBURY

To approach Sudbury by train, either from Bures or from Clare, is to thread a diversified pastoral country—"the general grassy face of Suffolk," to quote the words of Carlyle. Journeying thus, you perceive the broad lineaments of the land more readily than during a slower progress. You see so much in fifteen minutes, nor should the advantages of height be ignored. On miles of embankment, or when crossing bridges or viaducts, you hold a superior position from which to survey the prospect; and even where the railroad traverses a valley you are higher from the roadway than you would otherwise be. Of all ways of seeing a landscape, there are "none more vivid, in spite of canting dilettantes, than from a railway train." So wrote Stevenson in his essay on "Walking Tours," and he, I take it, knew more of these matters than most of us.

I have often wondered at the indifference of travellers to the scenes through which they pass. From Paddington to Pembrokeshire, from Euston to Cheshire, from Waterloo to the Isle of Wight, I have been in the company of those who never before journeyed in the same direction, and yet, through all those miles of English or Welsh scenery—in places beautiful, and almost everywhere full of interesting associations—my companions



have gossiped incessantly on trivialities, at times, perhaps, glancing impatiently through the window, as if to learn how soon the journey would end. I fancy no journey ends soon enough for some of the sons and daughters of men. Surely their highest ambition is to outstrip Puck, who, when asked to bring love-in-idleness to Oberon, promised to

. . . put a girdle round about the earth  
In forty minutes.

It may be urged, perhaps, that to stare for hours upon the passing country is the pastime of a child; that some of us were born wondering, and have wondered ever since. I am not careful to answer in this matter. Yet I would maintain, as I approach Sudbury, that to nourish an interest in all things is to preserve a large measure of happiness, and often enough we alone are to blame when that halo of romance, which surrounds so much in youth, fades prematurely into "the light of common day." A mother and young son—the Benjamin of her family, as I gathered—were on the platform at Bures, and we shared a compartment during the short run to Sudbury. Throughout the journey that boy stood at the window, his nose pressed against the pane. Every passing object was of interest, and as the train neared Sudbury his delight was unbounded, for he had never yet walked its streets. In fact, the little traveller was on his longest journey; he was born in Essex, and to-day, crossing the Suffolk border for the first time, he was entering an unknown land. By-and-by, he may deem his first visit to a town an event of no importance; I do not know that he will therefore be a wiser or happier person.

Sudbury is so old, so interesting a town, that an adequate description of it would fill a large volume. Fuller put the truth pithily, as he usually did, when he wrote that it was "as great as most, and as ancient as any town in Suffolk." There appears to be no doubt that it was formerly an important commercial centre; especially in the days when its inhabitants learned the art of weaving from the Flemings, introduced here by Edward III. The importance of Bury St. Edmund's may largely be attributed to its monastery; but Sudbury was most frequently associated with Norwich in the minds of men of olden times, when the town was called Southburgh, in distinction from Norwich, *i.e.*, the Northburgh. For confirmation of this we may turn to Camden, who tells us that the South Burgh was thought to have once been the chief town of its county. Interesting glimpses of its history are scattered here and there in contemporary records. Before William I. so generously rewarded his friends and helpers with gifts of English manors, the property belonged to Earl Morcar; but he was forced to relinquish his rights, and Sudbury was thenceforth for many years owned by the De Clares, who left their name and memory in the small town some nine miles to the north-west, beside the Stour. But the records of Domesday Book are not the oldest concerned with Sudbury. The place is mentioned in the "Saxon Chronicle," and money is said to have been coined here in the days of Ethelred II. Again the meagreness of records has to be deplored. Baldwin of Shimperling, who founded here a Dominican Priory during the reign of Henry III., left little save his name behind him; the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, who had once a

hospital beside the Stour, are but a memory ; the Benedictine monks, who built here one of many cells to Westminster Abbey, left no story of their doings for the edification of posterity. Their priory stood close to the road to Bury ; most of it was destroyed nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, but you may still see what remains of the chapel where they were wont to pray.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached the town. My first impression, as I loitered on Market Hill, was that the townsmen had, with uncommon diligence, striven to modernise their surroundings. Shops which would have made an earlier generation stare and gasp are plentiful, and the wares exposed for sale would not disgrace the most fashionable neighbourhood elsewhere. In one such shop I bought a view of Market Hill, showing its appearance one hundred years ago, and the contrast between that picture and the present aspect of the spot is very striking. Only one object appears practically unaltered—the tower of St. Peter's Church. It is evidently market day in the old picture. There is an amazing concourse of persons, dressed after the fashions of their age, so quaint to twentieth-century eyes. In the foreground, Hodge, wearing a cow-gown and carrying a drover's stick, is complacently regarding a bullock that reclines in the middle of the road ; another bullock and several sheep are close to three soldiers, very imposing in scarlet coats with epaulettes, and a sort of primordial busby on their heads. Rustics are gossiping in groups ; with hands in pockets or arms a-kimbo,—all, apparently, well fed and contented. The picture shows what Sudbury was like ere, as Lewis mentions, it was paved and lighted in 1825, shortly before the erection of the Town



Hall. During many previous years it had felt the effects of the declining trade in woollens ; the houses in the principal thoroughfares were largely owned by "decayed manufacturers," and their condition often revealed the owner's poverty. The streets, as a contemporary record tells us, were very dirty—which cannot be said of its chief thoroughfares to-day.

Sudbury was between two periods of prosperity when, in 1722, it was visited by Defoe. Even then its trade was considerable : for Defoe found here "a great manufacture of says and perpetuanas." The trade of Sudbury does not seem to have brought commensurate prosperity to its population as a whole ; for whilst the woollen and other industries gave employment to large numbers, the proportion of extremely poor persons was very great. This individual poverty had doubtless been felt more or less acutely since Edward III. had supposed that by prohibiting the sale of English wool to merchants abroad he could foster a great home industry. Mr. James Paton has shown how disastrous that policy proved. Edward wished us to take an advantage with both hands. He brought fullers and weavers from Flanders, and having secured expert workers he desired the raw material produced in England to be wholly at their disposal. Wise after the event, we know that an inevitable result followed. The freedom of trade was thereby hampered ; much "running" of smuggled wool followed, and the trade declined. Under Elizabeth the English producer exported what wool he pleased ; but in 1660 this liberty was once more denied him, nor was it again granted until 1825. Defoe was therefore in Sudbury when its manufacturers enjoyed whatever protection Parliament

could devise ; and the phenomenal poverty of the town was its chief feature.

Such was the condition of Sudbury when Thomas Gainsborough, whose father himself was in the wool trade, was born in 1727, in what was then the Black Horse Inn. The house still stands in Sepulchre Street, on the right-hand side as you go towards the river, but it has been refronted, and little save massive timbers now remains of the house that sheltered the artist's infancy. The house bears a simple but sufficient inscription :

IN THIS HOUSE WAS BORN  
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH  
A 1727 D

A small house, mostly of red brick, with steeply sloping roof of slates : it needed the inscription to associate it with one who knew its corners and crannies so long ago. An old view—copied, like that of Market Hill, on a picture post-card sold locally—bears the words “Gainsborough's Birth-place, Sudbury.” Words apart, I will answer for it no man in the town would guess its significance. There are several houses in the picture, which is a strange medley. Women are standing at open doorways or sitting on stools in the street ; horses are drinking from a low trough of primitive design ; somebody, whether man or woman I know not, is seated on a cart in the very uneven street ; fowls wander in the foreground. I fancy there was much artistic licence in the original print ; for an open country with trees, and a mountain or mountain-like cloud in the distance, is shown on the left ; whereas, so far as I can ascertain, the houses in Stour Street (which is a continuation of

the same thoroughfare) extended to the river at a very early period. I noticed several old, gabled structures between Gainsborough's house and the Stour; one of them, "Salter's Hall," bears the date 1450, thus synchronising with the impeachment of a Duke of Suffolk and the revolt of Jack Cade. The carvings on door-posts and under gables are conspicuous, and are, in fact, the one surviving resemblance to the scene depicted in the old print, where carvings are a noticeable feature. Gainsborough's house, to-day and then, suggests a reflection. It was surely far easier for an artist to find pictures ready to his hand in the eighteenth century than it is to-day. From that standpoint, if from no other, the neighbourhood of Stour Street has not improved as decades passed.

We do not know on what day Gainsborough was born; but it stands recorded that he was baptized on May 14, at the Independent Meeting House near his father's residence. His father was cunning in fence; his mother, who loved flowers as only a woman can, could paint them skilfully. She was sister to Humphrey Burroughs, sometime curate at St. Gregory's, the oldest church in Sudbury. Thomas was her youngest child, and from her, as we may well suppose, he inherited his love of art. It is known that he sketched whilst quite a child; the neighbourhood, then more thickly wooded, was perennially inspiring to the artist that was to be. He claimed, in after life, that he knew every clump of trees, almost every tree, for some considerable distance from his home, a claim identical with that of Constable. Many sketches and paintings of his homeland are presumably lost; but his landscape *Near Cornard*—



a wooded scene, with a pond, and the village in the background—is among others in the National Gallery. Cunningham mentions that Gainsborough once gave some of his early sketches to a lady, who pasted them on her walls, and there left them when she removed.

I should be charged with ignorance were I to omit all anecdotes of the Gainsboroughs at Sudbury. John Gainsborough was himself a remarkable man. Too generous to prosper greatly; too upright to levy the unjust “toll” usually exacted from the spinner, he was nevertheless suspected as an occasional evader of the Revenue Customs, and once had recourse to an ingenious expedient when challenged by an officer of small bravery. The officer met him on his way home, driving a cart containing some shrouds, first introduced by him as an article of trade in Sudbury. The officer asked what the cart contained. “I’ll show you,” said John, and promptly threw a shroud around his own figure in the darkness of night. The officer fled.

John Gainsborough died in 1748, when Thomas was living at Ipswich “in a small house at a rent of six pounds a year.” He had, says Cunningham, “something mysterious in his history.” Indeed, strange stories were abroad concerning his eccentricities; he was thought to go about in fear of his life, or to nourish sinister designs on the life of others; it was long asserted that beneath his clothing he carried deadly weapons. Perhaps his sleek appearance belied the goodness of his heart. He was ostentatiously careful of his hair, and of his white teeth, and was “a personable man”—whatever that may mean. His eldest son, long remembered in Sudbury as “scheming Jack,” was not unreasonably deemed eccentric. He

was as fond of models and experiments as Isaac Newton, but lacked that perseverance which turns a pleasing hobby into serviceable knowledge. He attempted to fly; he constructed curious miniatures in brass and tin; he tried to adjust the ascertainment of the longitude—a subject that presently interested Dr. Johnson, whose “account of an attempt to ascertain the longitude,” derived from Zachariah Williams, was first printed by Dodsley, in 1755. “Jack” Gainsborough might have said, with Beaconsfield, that he had attempted many things; but could certainly not have added that he had usually succeeded in the end. He took up subject after subject, only to lay them aside at length; the models, and fragments of models, found in his house at his death might have formed the nucleus of a museum of mechanics.

Thomas Gainsborough was in youth more fortunate than many artists. Parents, not unnaturally, look askance at sons who cherish artistic aspirations, seeming to prefer any such profession to that followed, perhaps with great profit, by their family. No impediment was placed in the way of Gainsborough, whose genius was from the first unquestionable. Two stories of his early proficiency are well known, but can hardly be omitted here. Once, anxious to avoid school, he wrote, in facsimile of his father’s handwriting, “Please give Tom a holiday.” The forgery was so clever that Uncle Burroughs, master at the Grammar School, suspected nothing, and the holiday was granted. It was well for Tom that the school was not ruled by Burroughs father-in-law, the notorious Busby, who would assuredly have scourged him sorely for so gross an imposition. As it turned out, the trick was presently discovered; but

when the father heard that Tom sketched during these stolen hours, his anger was mollified, and he deemed his son a genius indeed. On another occasion the boy gave even surer proof of his skill, as a limner of likeness. Sketching in his father's garden, he presently saw a man's head rise above the wall, the eyes fixed earnestly on some ripening pears. As it chanced, the head was strongly relieved against a bright background, and Gainsborough sketched it with a few rapid touches of amazing accuracy. So faithful was the unstudied likeness that the man was obviously abashed when, accused of a design to steal pears, he was confronted with his portrait! The subject was afterwards elaborated, and *Tom Peartree's Portrait* has had numerous admirers. It was shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885.

Gainsborough went first to London as student-artist in 1741. His career in London and in Bath does not concern me here; but I shall revert to him when we reach the neighbourhood of Landguard Fort, so closely associated with his fame. Back in Sudbury in 1745, he painted portraits, and vastly surprised his old friends by the elegance of his attire and his courtly manners. As I rambled from the house where he was born, coming presently to Friar Street, I remembered that here he lived awhile with his beautiful bride, Margaret Burr, who sat to him for her portrait ere they fell in love. Conjecture was long busy with the name of Margaret Burr. A little younger than her husband, who was but nineteen when he married, she was said to be a natural daughter of some prince in exile, or, as others affirmed, of the Duke of Bedford. However that might be—and I gather that even Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse



cannot settle the point—she proved eminently lovable and loving ; moreover, she had two hundred pounds a year, which sometimes means so much. The story runs that Gainsborough first saw Miss Burr when, as he sat sketching in a Suffolk wood, she intruded upon the scene by accident, and at once arrested his attention by her rare beauty. It is thought that the story has lost nothing in the telling ; if essentially true, the young artist was typical of earth's more favoured sons, " sole sitting by the shores of old romance."

Continuing my wanderings, I came to the Church of All Saints, in the lower part of the town, surrounded by a small graveyard where lie some relatives of Gainsborough. Its tower, conspicuous afar to travellers approaching from the south or west, is not unlike the tower of St. Gregory's. The church, originally built about 1150, is now largely Perpendicular, but the arches on either side of the chancel are Early Decorated. Here, as at Bures, lie several members of the Waldegrave family ; here, too, the inscriptions on their tombs are lost, and I doubt whether much is known concerning any one of them. The Waldegraves were evidently a numerous family ; few, however, gained real distinction in any walk of life ; even the " Dictionary of National Biography " devotes but few columns to their records. The name, perpetuated in these old churches, is a name only ; and we say of these Waldegraves, as was said of Merovingian Kings : " They are all gone ; sunk—down, down, with the tumult they made ; and the rolling and the trampling of ever new generations passes over them ; and they hear it not any more for ever."

All Saints' Church contains an interesting octagonal

pulpit. It dates from the fifteenth century ; its oak is dark with age, but the delicate carving is wonderfully preserved. As regards its condition it might have been wrought by Grinling Gibbons. Its beauties were long hidden. Very many years ago, perhaps during the Restoration, it was covered with rough boarding ; this was thickly coated with paint, and so remained until the restorer unveiled its hidden traceries, and the pulpit stood revealed as though fresh from the hand that fashioned it. Here, too, are massive doors that speak eloquently of their antiquity—doors that might defy the ravages of time till time shall be no more. The church, as I have said, was built about 1150, but there are reasons for supposing that it occupies the site of an earlier structure. For the doorways of stone that lead to the tower stairs rest upon very ancient memorial slabs, so situated that they were certainly not laid down after the erection of the present structure.

A soft rain, drifting aslant before a westerly breeze, and drawing a fuller fragrance from roses in cottage gardens, fell continuously as I sauntered through quaint back-streets, listening to the rattle of the hand-loom, an unfamiliar sound to many ears. It is familiar enough to folk in Sudbury, as is the peculiar aspect of the rooms in which weavers work. The weaver needs a good light, for obvious reasons ; a large window, perhaps consisting of several frames placed side by side, is inserted both in the back and front wall, and the loom stands in the centre. Through those windows you may hear the canary sing cheerily whilst his master or mistress weaves ; an old Suffolk saying assures us that every weaver has his canary, a golden testimony to the excellence of his taste. A

row of weavers' cottages stands close to Gainsborough's house ; in fact, despite the depression in trade, these centres of business are still, as a native told me, "part and parcel of Sudbury."

I had long felt an interest in the weaver. As it chanced, I made an acquaintance when in Dedham, which soon ripened into friendship, and my new friend had many weavers in his service. He invited me to visit him in his manufactory at Sudbury. Nothing loth, I found him at an early hour. Together we passed from loom to loom, watching the weaving of silk fabrics of cunning design and most exquisite colour, destined for such upholstery as ladies love. A piece of rich brocaded silk is the outcome of much study, taste and skill ; the treasure-houses of Europe and Asia are ransacked for the antique patterns they contain, and the latest design in my lady's boudoir was perhaps in the home of an Italian noble or Chinese mandarin a century ago. Such silks are largely woven by Jacquart hand-loom. Coming often from China, the raw silk is "thrown" in Italy, France and elsewhere on the Continent, but only occasionally in England ; dyeing, however, is done in Leek and Macclesfield. The industries of many lands are thus laid under contribution ere a piece of finished silk is set before us—and the width of a 63 in. cloth may contain 16,000 threads ; of the threads there may lie 150,000 yards in one pound of raw silk ! Moreover, the process of weaving by hand-loom is slow. A dexterous hand may weave one foot or two yards in a day, according to the intricacy of the texture. The silk passes from skein to bobbin, from bobbin to warping-mill, from warping-mill to beaming-frame, from beaming-



frame to loom. Who will write for us on the romance of weaving ? and what of the pathos with which it is at times associated ? I visited one old woman—a lady in manner and speech—who had known few pleasures, for many years, saving those of toil at the loom. I heard of her skill from a third person ; her contentment and patience I could learn from her face. She told me, with a touch of pardonable pride, of the costly silks she had woven in her time—how she had made velvet for a princess, and for the coronation of King Edward VII. I contrasted her with the weaver in Arnold's sonnet, who looked " thrice dispirited " when seen through his window in Spitalfields ; comparing her, rather, to the blind weaver in a beautiful poem which I have failed to trace. For this old weaver in Sudbury would, I am sure, acquiesce in the poet's words :

I do but keep the shuttles right,  
And One above does all the rest.

The weaver bade me a cheery " good morning," as I descended her staircase. Outside, the rain still fell steadily, so I found welcome shelter at Ye Old Waggon. I thought the hostel belied its name ; it was an old house once, as surely as it was once new, but is now garnished and fitted in such manner as to hide traces of age. Upon the wall I saw that which carried me in thought to a tiny room where a row of volumes in buckram, penned by an unresting hand, is faced by the portrait of their author. For here, little as I looked to see it, hung a likeness of Stevenson, framed in oak, and beneath it are copied words of prayer for strength to discharge the duties of the day—words written at Vailima, surely





THE HOUSE IN WHICH THE ARTIST WAS BORN.



without a thought that they would ever meet eye of man or woman at an inn in Suffolk. The prayer, seen thus unexpectedly, moved me more than I care to say. But, on reflection, I thought it not incongruously placed; for Stevenson deemed an inn as serviceable as a church, and an honest potman far preferable to a dishonest cleric.

Close to the inn I met the caretaker of St. Gregory's. The church adjoins the Croft and Walnut Tree Lane; and is full of interest. The old man pointed out what I ought to observe, and discoursed on the "moral of all human tales" with much fervour. He was deeper in personal knowledge than in legendary or historic lore. He knew nothing of Dowsing, who, on January 9, 1643, visited this church with his helpers, "brake down ten mighty great Angels in glass," and duly recorded the fact in his Journal. But he led me from spot to spot with a patience worthy of greater duties. He thought highly of a verse on a headstone, a verse which has been read in other graveyards:

This lovely bud, so young, so fair,  
Called hence by early doom,  
Just came to show how sweet a flower  
In Paradise could bloom.

Close by, in an angle outside of the church, formed by the south aisle and the tower, he showed me a curious altar-tomb, with a canopy above; on the wall behind the slab there were formerly brasses, the outlines of which can be clearly traced. Evidently this was the tomb of some man of note, but his name, as my guide thought, will not be known till the Judgment. The brasses were

perhaps removed by Dowsing, together with those missing from slabs within and without the south porch.

The caretaker led me into the Carter Chapel, in the south aisle, where he showed an inscription on the wall, of unusual length. "I'll sit here," said he, "while you copy the lot. It's all true, as I can prove." I did not copy "the lot," but I noted its purport. It is a "grateful memorial" of Thomas Carter, who, when making his last will and testament in the year 1706, was concerned for the poverty of St. Gregory's Church, so he endowed it with "Improprate tythes" of some £60 per annum, for the spiritual cure of the souls of the parish, and the better maintenance of the minister. He also made a far different provision, by which he earned the gratitude of many generations, as we at least hope. He bequeathed an estate, at Pebmarsh in Essex (six miles from Sudbury), into the hands of trustees, with very specific instructions touching the disposal of its annual rental, some £70. Upon the Feast of St. Thomas, every year for ever, an anniversary sermon was to be preached in the church; fifty of the poorest men in Sudbury were to receive "outward garments," 14s.-worth to each man; likewise, fifty of the poorest women were to receive outward garments, 10s.-worth to each woman—which bequest, as the inscription truly says, was a signal testimony of his care for the bodies as well as the souls of men. That sermon is still preached annually on St. Thomas' Day. A list of worthy recipients is drawn up in the Town Hall; these assemble to hear the discourse, and the "outward garments" are afterwards distributed in the vestry. And, lest the cynic should remark that charity covers a multitude of sins, the inscription concludes with

words which I quote in full : " His good name showeth that his charity was no commutation for unjust dealing or an ill-led life, and his excellent Will that he could prudently choose the best method of entailing a blessing upon what he left to his numerous relations. Learn from this to emulate whatever was praiseworthy in him—Farewell." From the testimony of Defoe and others as to the number of poor in Sudbury we may suppose there has been little difficulty in finding recipients of Thomas Carter's bounty.

I was loth to leave this old church—so old that it is named in the "Saxon Chronicle." The rain had spent itself as I loitered in the Carter Chapel : as I passed into the nave, the sunshine streamed brightly through its large, mediæval windows, touching the stonework of arch and pillar to clearer beauty. The stalls and *misere-eres*, of quaintly carved oak, are, it is supposed, survivals from the day when St. Gregory's knew its own college, of which a gateway at the west end of the churchyard is now the only relic. Something of this college and its founder will be said in my next chapter. A curious incident is recorded concerning a house that stood in the churchyard early in the fifteenth century, but was long ago demolished. I believe its very site is now forgotten. It was once the refuge, hardly the home, of two hermits, John Levynton and Richard Appleby. The latter was "a true Member of Holy Cherche and a gode gostly Levere." We may question how far God is honoured, or "Holy Church" served, by men who sever their connection with the world in which Providence has placed them, hoping to merit Heaven by inhabiting a hovel or cave, or by standing on a pillar. Far nobler,



surely, is the man who braves the battle of life in its every circumstance ; who discharges the trivial round and the common task ; looking with a great content into the face of wife and child, and with a great hope to that day when all faithful service shall be rewarded. The weak, not the strong, became hermits. The strong man stood his ground, in mediæval as in later times ; it is the weak man

Who quits a world where strong temptations try,  
And since 'tis hard to combat learns to fly,

thereby owning defeat, and leaving others to man the ramparts he has himself deserted. A like cowardice is shown, as it seems to me, by all who shun communion with their fellows. The flaws, I take it, are in themselves rather than in the world ; and no wholly sane man need cry aloud in anguish, " I have not loved the world, nor the world me." Richard Appleby was probably like other hermits, whose sanctity was measured by the wretchedness of their condition. In this respect the hermits of the West differed little from those of the East. " The most perfect hermits," wrote Gibbon, " are supposed to have passed many days without food, many nights without sleep, and many years without speaking ; and glorious was the *man* (I abuse that name) who contrived any cell, or seat, of a peculiar construction, which might expose him, in the most inconvenient posture, to the inclemency of the seasons." In short, to fail in life, to skulk in some quiet corner and take " this for an hermitage " was to be a " gode gostly Levere," like the hermit of St. Gregory's at Sudbury.

" Something too much of this," as Childe Harold

said after lamenting the evils of a cynical introspection, and of the poisoned springs of life. Leaving these memorials of other times, I sought the banks of the Stour, and sauntered awhile in Friar's Meadow, then past the Flour Mills, past Croft Bridge, and across the open meadow land among yellow hawkweed and purple scabious, lesser scull-cap and bright silverweed. After all, this seems a medley of a world, where we wander hither and thither, asking of every spot its claim to notice. Here a church has stood for a thousand years; here a library hoards the wisest thoughts of thirty centuries; here a nook once sheltered a hermit; here a martyr dyed the earth with his blood; here a king is known to have wooed a fair lady; here a poet penned verses that can never die; here a painter has immortalised a homely scene; here a palace, grim in solidity or grey with age, was long the home of

. . . the heroic and the free,  
The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea.

Here, where the Stour flows noiselessly through level meads, I cared little enough for the kaleidoscope of history, but a great deal for the flowers that blow beside the river, or rest upon its bosom. Water plantains peep among the flowering rushes; in the less accessible reaches, half choked with sedge, the water-lily blooms; arrowhead and willow herb are plentiful; the purple loosestrife rears its tall spikes above a score of plants of meaner growth. One of the handsomest plants that border English waters, the purple loosestrife varies greatly in size. I have never seen it taller than in Suffolk. It always takes the eye—in our own country as in others

where it is equally conspicuous ; it is a common object in parts of America and Australia. Nor do I know a stream more densely bordered with water-mint, or with the yellow tansy, which grows so near the water's edge that we might suppose it a wholly aquatic plant. Beside the Stour it is as plentiful as common flea-bane, and nobody knows better than Suffolk lads and lasses how common that flower is.

Turning from the river-side, the lover of old churches and houses finds much of interest if, passing westwards into Essex, he rambles awhile in the neighbourhood of the Belchamp villages. At Belchamp Walter, some four miles west from Sudbury, in a pleasant valley crossed by a tributary of the Stour, he should enter the Church of the Virgin Mary, having noticed its Perpendicular tower, so beautifully mantled with ivy. Here, unless the building has of late been restored beyond recognition, is a floriated Norman font ; in the chancel is an ancient aumbry, a piscena, and several windows of Early English and Decorated types. He will notice, too, the carving upon an arched recess, on the north side of the nave, where lies one of the Earls of Oxford—those haughty De Veres who had a home at Castle Hedingham, five miles farther south-west, where you may still see the massive Norman keep beneath which they so often rode, the huge banqueting hall where they made merry on occasion, the room where, in 1151, died Maud, daughter of Count Eustace and wife of Stephen ; and, but few yards from the castle, the Church of St. Nicholas, where they worshipped when they listed. From Belchamp Walter, turning once again towards the Stour, it is two miles to Belchamp Otten. Here the small church,



dedicated to St. Ethelbert and All Saints, can show fewer features of interest, but the south door is of fine Norman workmanship, the font is ancient, and some carved timbers beneath the belfry are of an age which can only be vaguely surmised. The dedication to St. Ethelbert is due to the fact that he was King of East Anglia, and was deemed "a Holy King"; he was foully murdered by Offa of Mercia, and his story, like that of St. Edmund the Martyr, gave rise to many legends. Belchamp St. Paul, still nearer the river, is a quiet village, once owned by St. Paul's Cathedral; the church stands apart, on high ground; it contains some quaintly carved benches, and the Perpendicular tower displays grotesque gargoyles.

All this—as a Georgian divine remarked after discoursing for an hour on the trumpet of the seventh angel—is a digression. At evenfall, prayers were chanted at St. Peter's Church before an audience of eight young ladies and the writer. In many towns, the clergy deserve praise for their brave persistence. Having discretionary powers regarding the ordinances of their church, they disdain to suspend an ill-attended service, but do their part in the presence of few or many, facing discouragements that would vanquish slacker men. My thoughts wandered from the matters in hand; but the ladies were more devout, and I gathered from their demeanour that evensong was with them a customary devotion. Mr. Samuel Pepys—who was wont to stare at pretty ladies in church, and once attempted to take the hand of one of pleasing appearance, till she repulsed him with a pin—would perhaps have profited by so unique an opportunity, and have formed an acquaintance

among such worshippers. But I, less gallant than he, carried with me no memory of sweet faces seen in St. Peter's Church—much to the chagrin of my hostess at the inn near by, who suspected the presence of a friend in that bevy, and desired me to describe each individual ! I fancy she pitied my indifference to their charms ; but we drifted into copious talk, as traveller and hostess will, and presently those ladies were forgotten by both. Mine host, it appeared, was till recently in another district ; but circumstances were adverse, and he had come to try his fortune in the little Suffolk town. I trust that fortune, who favours the brave, will favour my acquaintance of that night ; so shall he nourish kindly thoughts of Suffolk, and, go where he may, take with him pleasant memories of Sudbury.

## CHAPTER XII

### SIMON OF SUDBURY

"AMONG other things," said the caretaker of St. Gregory's at Sudbury, "here is this." As he spoke, the old man led me towards the vestry. Here, opening a tiny niche in the wall, he drew forth a skull, well preserved, but obviously of great antiquity. "This," said he, "is the skull of Simon Tybald. You've heard of him, I daresay. He went in and out that old gateway in the churchyard many a time. If you read what's written here you'll see how he was killed." He pointed to a small parchment, affixed to the door of the niche. That parchment, after some preamble, records that Simon "was at length barbarously beheaded upon Tower Hill in London by the rabble in Wat Tyler's Rebellion in the reign of Richard II., 1382."\* The skull was promptly replaced, lest it should suffer by too long exposure in the open air. Thus, almost daily, this gruesome relic—part and parcel of a scholar, prelate and statesman five and a quarter centuries ago—is drawn from its dark resting-place as a rare trophy of the past, and exhibited, not without pride, to the curious eyes of visitors.

The story of which that skull is, as it were, the nucleus, is nowhere very clearly or circumstantially set down, for it is not fully known. It is dispersed through many

\* The Insurrection under Wat Tyler occurred in 1381.



volumes, and to gather its parts into one narrative is like piecing together the fragments of some old shrine, long since scattered, long since relegated to a forgotten recess, "neglected and apart." For the most part, however, those sources of information are full of interest, and are at least sufficiently full to provide matter for a vignette, if not for a full-length portrait.

Simon Tybald was born in the parish of St. Gregory's, Sudbury, in his father's house, which stood near the west end of the church. The year of his birth is not known. As a youth, he was sent to study in Paris, then far ahead of most cities in the practice and patronage of learning. It is probable, I think, that Tybald became widely known as a theologian and churchman; for he was appointed Chaplain to Pope Innocent VI., who, as Platina of Cremona tells us, was skilled in canon and civil law; moreover, this Pope was scrupulous to a nicety in his choice of priests for preferment, always selecting such as were known to be learned men of blameless life. Of Tybald's relations with the Pope we know little; nor does he figure prominently in English history until, in 1356, he became Innocent's nuncio at the Court of Edward III.

In the age in which Tybald lived and moved almost every ecclesiastic of eminence filled some political office, and the story of the church is inseparably blended with that of the nation. This, in part due to the Papal policy of general interference in European politics, was the chief factor in the life of Tybald. He returned to England when affairs were assuming a very grave aspect. The year of his appointment as nuncio was the year of Poitiers; we were exceedingly powerful in the eyes of all rivals,

but equally weak at home, where Chaucer and Wyclif looked with shrewd eyes upon parties and communities of conflicting interests. The Church, Romish in doctrine and ritual, stoutly resisted the dictation of the Roman Pontiff, as indeed she had done, whenever she pleased, during every reign from the days of the Conqueror. Shortly before Tybald became nuncio, our first Statute of Præmunire had become law ; during the first year of his nuncioship Wyclif published his "Last Age of the Church," and it was evident that there must soon be open conflict between the new and the old schools of theology—between the men who read and revered the Scriptures and the men who made religion a traffic in relics and a school of beggary. In a word, the Papal claims and abuses had become so monstrous that no English Christian, with the Scriptures in his hand, could shut his eyes to the fact that the Church needed reforming. It was merely a question of the shape reform was to assume.

Tybald was a man of complex character. In the light of subsequent events, we must pronounce that he was not well qualified for the offices which he filled. As a parson at Sudbury he might have laboured for many years and escaped serious censure or mishap, but he was destined to fill positions which have proved fatal to even abler men. As a prominent ecclesiastic, he had difficult parts to play. In 1361 he was appointed by Innocent VI. to the Bishopric of London, and soon had occasion to make up his mind as to the extent of his sympathy with political or ecclesiastical reformers. He found much to reform in old St. Paul's, and seems to have desired that reformation should be thorough ;

but he wished it accomplished on his own lines rather than on lines laid down by others. Moreover, he was brought into contact with men who differed from him as widely as they differed from one another ; and, clever and learned as he certainly was, he lacked those commanding abilities which have at times enabled bishops to subdue archbishops, or archbishops to subdue Popes. His limitations became more obvious as time passed, and when, in 1375, he became Archbishop of Canterbury, he entered upon a series of tasks which eventually compassed his death.

The story of Tybald's public life in England may be divided into two episodes. The one is concerned with his dealings with Wyclif, the other with his fatal contempt for the lower orders of the people. Both episodes must be briefly treated here ; as I am only concerned with Tybald as a native of Sudbury, who deserves more than such passing reference as might have been his portion had I written of him when in that town.

The England against which Wyclif protested was so corrupt that it is difficult to see how it could have been worse. No one who has looked carefully into the history of that period can wonder that Wyclif regarded the awful ravage wrought by the Black Death as a chastisement from the Almighty. At the time when Avignon, as Petrarch said, was a residence of fiends and devils, London and other large towns in England were largely the resort of two classes, the robbers and the robbed. We need not look far to learn that neither Chaucer nor Langland drew exaggerated pictures of the life of their contemporaries. Knighton tells us that Archbishop Islip forbade curates to claim an increase in stipend of



more than one mark annually ; consequently, says Stowe, many priests turned robbers rather than live so meagrely ! At Court, according to Hollinshed, three hundred servitors were employed in the daily preparation of meat and drink for ten thousand persons, and the general extravagance in apparel was if possible even worse. Abuses of many kinds followed in the footsteps of the mendicant friars, whom Wyclif, in a tract, charged with stealing children by gross misrepresentations to parents. The condition of the lower classes was wretched ; the lowest, still liable to be bartered like cattle, was hopelessly depraved and destitute. Wheat varied in price from a few shillings to a few pounds per quarter, apparently at haphazard, and the people were practically robbed by the begging friars—some of whom, it must in justice be said, were merely tools of a corrupt system. Langland, after describing the luxury characteristic of their convents, adds :

And yet these bilderes wiln beggen a bag ful of whete  
Of a pure poor man that may onethe paye  
Half his rent in a yere, and half ben behynde.

Now, in face of these facts, which Tybald must surely have known, we can but wonder why he was not more favourably inclined towards Wyclif and all that Wyclif's followers advocated. He can hardly have doubted the reformer's personal integrity. The same year which saw Tybald made Bishop of London saw Wyclif chosen Warden of Baliol, and Tybald might easily have learned how thoroughly Wyclif deserved the honour. The explanation of Tybald's attitude towards Wyclif lies, I think, in the conflicting prejudices which he nourished,

and which led me to mention his complex character. He was an ecclesiastical reformer ; on one occasion he blamed the Canterbury pilgrims for their folly, and pointed out how hardly they could hope for indulgence through patronage of the Shrine of Becket. But he was a reactionary in politics. Hence Wyclif, whose protests were as much concerned with the condition of priest and peasant as with the tenets of theology or the encroachments of the Papacy, appeared to Tybald as a reformer whose noble aspirations must not be too zealously encouraged because of his sympathies with the illiterate rabble. The Church has spoiled many a politician ; Tybald was a Churchman spoiled by politics ; one of many who, then as in other ages, failed to distinguish between opinions and prejudices.

Tybald and Wyclif met at the Conference of Bruges, soon after the former's translation to Canterbury. The circumstances under which they met were such as to justify my views as to Tybald's attitude towards Wyclif. Tybald's commission empowered him to confer with the representatives of Gregory XI. touching the disputed tribute from this country, which the Parliament had decided to withhold. There can be little doubt that on this matter the views of Tybald and Wyclif were practically identical, and we may well suppose that, far from engaging in unpleasant disputes, the two ecclesiastics fraternised agreeably on that occasion. Moreover, when, early in 1377, Gregory ordered Tybald to summon Wyclif to a trial for heresy, the Archbishop seems to have been very willing to throw the onus of the whole proceeding on Courtenay, his successor as Bishop of London, and was perhaps secretly pleased at the abortive result

of the trial in St. Paul's, so sensationally broken up by the adherents of the accused and the followers of John of Gaunt. The mere facts that Tybald, in partial obedience to the Papal demand, had deprived Wyclif and ordered him to spread no more heretical doctrines abroad, proves little or nothing as to the measure of sympathy felt by the Archbishop for the Reformer. Tybald probably did many things as Archbishop which were opposed to his own views. Foxe, despite the brief which was ever in his hand, was probably correct when he wrote of the Bishops as "urging and inciting their Archbishop Simon Sudburie" to grant an order of citation for Wyclif to appear before them.

Tybald was probably as pleased with the result of the next step taken by the Pope to silence Wyclif, for there is no reason to suppose that he differed from the dignitaries of Oxford, who showed little disposition to comply with the Pope's demands. He wrote, however, to the Chancellor of that University, requesting that Wyclif should appear before his ecclesiastical superiors to answer for the faith that was in him. Accordingly Wyclif appeared before the Synod of Lambeth in 1378. But although now deprived of the active assistance of John of Gaunt, other friends were not lacking. Many entered the Archiepiscopal Chapel by force, declaring themselves upholders of the accused, and violence would probably have been done had Wyclif been seriously in danger; but the trial was again abortive, for Anne of Bohemia intervened, and Sir Lewis Clifford, in her name, commanded the Synod to withhold sentence.

During these years, Tybald had not forgotten his native town of Sudbury. Together with his brother,



known as John of Chertsey, he purchased the entire property of St. Gregory's Church, rebuilt much of the west end, and erected a College a little westward from the tower, on the ground formerly occupied by his father's house, for the maintenance of five priests and a Warden. At Canterbury, too, he is remembered by the gate which he built "on the line where the eastern wall ran along the Stour," still known as the West Gate, and for his efforts to restore the cathedral. But he was one of many prelates whose lives were almost entirely occupied in the discharge of public duties; and those petty details concerning places visited, or books read or written, often so full of interest, are wholly lacking from the story of Simon of Sudbury. We know, however, that during his visitation in 1376, he was drawn into a quarrel with the monks of St. Augustine's at Canterbury, a quarrel which was still *sub judice* when he died.

When, on July 16, 1377, Tybald placed the crown on the head of Richard II., he may be said to have enacted the first scene in the tragedy of his death. Edward III. had greatly impoverished the country by those wars which had brought so much glory to our arms, and his successor, a mere boy, was promptly confronted by empty coffers and discontented subjects. Nor did matters mend; on the contrary, they grew from bad to worse until, when Tybald became Chancellor of England in 1380, it was no longer possible to avoid some measure for the creation of funds. The Parliament met at Northampton, and Tybald urged the need for a large grant. The grant was provided by a poll-tax. The people immediately rose, and took violent measures. They broke into the prison at Maidstone, releasing the

priest John Ball, whom Tybald had excommunicated; they robbed Tybald's house at Canterbury; they sacked his palace at Lambeth. Tybald, naturally exasperated by such outrages, followed a very unwise course. He spoke contemptuously of the people, and belittled their grievances; he even called them "barefooted rebels" in the hearing of others, and urged Richard not to conciliate but to subdue them.

The 100,000 men who assembled on Blackheath in 1381 were in no mood to be trifled with. Inflamed against all their rulers as such, and particularly against Tybald as the real or supposed author of their latest grievance, they poured into London like a flood. On June 13 they gathered upon Tower Hill, under the leadership of Jack Straw, and clamoured ominously for Tybald, who was known to be in the Tower with Richard and others. They seem, however, to have hesitated before deciding on violent measures, for, if I read the story aright, that day passed without anything being done. Next morning, in the Tower, Tybald celebrated Mass before the King. The mob had already surrounded the place, but waited until the King withdrew before forcing entrance. Then, denouncing Tybald as a traitor to the kingdom and the spoiler of the Commons, they brought him out by force upon Tower Hill. Here, after repeated blows, an Essex man named John Starling struck the head from the Chancellor's shoulders, and the name of Simon Tybald of Sudbury was added to the long list of those who, in troubled times, have lost their lives because of their eminence. Stowe mentions that the Treasurer, the King's confessor and a sergeant perished at the same time.

Southey's *Wat Tyler*, now seldom read, probably voices the sentiments of the actors in this tragedy with at least approximate accuracy. Here are some passages from Act II., concerning what passed in the Tower on that morning :

KING. What must we do ? the danger grows more imminent,  
The mob increases.

PHILPOT. Every moment brings  
Fresh tidings of our peril.

KING. It were well  
To grant them what they ask.

ARCHBISHOP. Ay, that my liege  
Were politic. Go boldly forth to meet them,  
Grant all they ask—however wild and ruinous—  
Meantime, the troops you have already summon'd  
Will gather round them. Then my Christian power  
Absolves you of your promise. . . .  
Lull them by promises—bespeak them fair.  
Go forth, my liege—spare not, if need requires,  
A solemn oath to ratify the treaty. . . .  
It is the sacred privilege of Kings,  
Howe'er they act, to render no account  
To man. The people have been taught this lesson,  
Nor can they soon forget it.

In another scene, Southey makes the rioters allude to Tybald after his death :

JOHN BALL. Jack Straw has forced the Tower : seized the  
Archbishop  
And beheaded him. . . .

PIERS. This Archbishop,  
He was oppressive to his humble vassals :  
Proud, haughty, avaricious——

BALL. A true high priest,  
Preaching humility with his mitre on,  
Praising up alms and Christian charity,



Even whilst his unforgiving hand distress'd  
His honest tenants.

PIERS.

He deserv'd his fate, then.

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It is not easy to determine exactly what followed after the murder of Tybald, nor do printed records bear out traditions cherished in Sudbury and repeated to visitors. It is said that Tybald's body lay for two days where the executioner had left it, but the head was carried about on a pole and presently placed on London Bridge. Subsequently Sir William Walworth ordered the body to be removed to Canterbury for burial. This was apparently done, and Tybald was interred on the south side of the altar of St. Dunstan, where his monument, beneath a canopy, may still be seen. But the men of Sudbury have long believed that Tybald's body was brought to his birthplace, and buried under a large slab of black marble in St. Gregory's Church, where the figure of a mitre can be traced ; others have asserted that once, when his tomb at Canterbury was examined, a cannon-ball was found where the skull should have been. Perhaps it is impossible to settle the point, for two suppositions are equally plausible. It is likely enough that some friends of Tybald, finding his body was to be carried to Canterbury, secured the skull from London Bridge, and took it to Sudbury ; it is as likely that skull and trunk were promptly brought together when Walworth ordered their burial, and that the skull at Sudbury is not the skull of Tybald, but that of another who perished at the same time. Obviously, no such doubts disturbed the faith of the caretaker of St. Gregory's, as he lovingly replaced the skull in its niche ; nor did I deem it necessary to shake the foundations of his belief.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LONG MELFORD

MR. DUTT has described Long Melford as a "delightful old town," and such it is. Its name is appropriate. From the railway station at its southern end to the grand old church on Melford Green is a distance of two miles; and one long line of houses, old or new, picturesque or ugly, stretches almost from the former to the latter. Hardly a type of English home is lacking in that thoroughfare, which comprises the whole town. Young women peer down upon the passer-by from dormer windows which their ancestors deemed ancient; old shopkeepers—shrewd, hale Englishmen—stand in their doorways to exchange salutations with their neighbours, or to eye with interest the passing stranger; men and women, older still, sit at open doorways gazing out upon the street as they will do daily until, when the summons comes—mysteriously, perhaps, as it came to Will o' the Mill—they are carried from those small rooms that sheltered them all their life long. To such, the passing of strangers is an incident of unfailing interest. I have watched these old folk when, catching sight of an unfamiliar figure in the street, they rose feebly, the better to scrutinise them, and, shading their eyes with shaking hand, watched them pass into an indistinct distance, where failing eyesight could follow no longer.

Defoe, who passed through Long Melford on his way to Lavenham and Bury St. Edmunds, found it "full of very good houses." He was told that the "village" was richer than Sudbury, and that many wealthy manufacturers resided in it. Like Sudbury, it was a busy centre of the clothing industries in the fifteenth century, and seems to have experienced as many ups and downs in its fortunes. Long ago, the manor was owned by the monks of Bury St. Edmunds, who owned so much. It is hardly a town of historic importance. But stories have gathered around it, as they gather around every town and village in the lapse of time; and Sir William Parker penned an interesting book when he wrote his "History of Long Melford."

The monks of Bury St. Edmunds, once upon a time, had much to talk of concerning doings at Melford, not then called "Long." The story takes us back to Abbot Samson, whom we thought of on the hillside near Bures. It came to pass that one Geoffrey Riddell, then Bishop of Ely, requested Samson to supply him with timber from his extensive woodlands, to be used for structures at Glemsford, a village north-west from Melford Green. Perhaps the Bishop, thinking of the difficulties of conveyance from afar, remembered the Abbot's fine timbers, within reasonable distance; perhaps he sought occasion to exert a fancied prerogative. Now, as it chanced, the Abbot was then staying in the manor-house at Melford, his own possession, and hither came the messenger from the Bishop, proposing to fell such trees as were required in Elmswell Wood—a spot near Tostock, where Richard Sibbes, author of the "Bruised Reed," was born in 1577; and equally near Woolpit, famous



through the fairy-tale of William of Newburgh. The Abbot did not wish to comply, but feared to offend by a direct refusal. So, thinking how best to avoid open rupture, he remembered that the request was for timber standing at *Elmswell*, where no large timber stood. Obviously a mistake had been made; the monk-messenger should have named *Elmset*, a spot shaded by fine old oaks, on Melford Manor itself. So the Abbot had recourse to subterfuge, in which he was eminently skilled. Permission was granted for the felling of timber in Elmswell Wood; then, the Abbot's woodmen set to work lustily, and felled the best trees in Elmset for other purposes—trees which, as it proved, had already been marked for the Bishop's use! They piled the trunks; they branded them with the mark of their monastery; they carried them to Bury St. Edmunds, and there used them for roofing the tower. Meanwhile, at Ely, the mistake was discovered; the monk was scolded and sent back to Melford—too late. "A practical Abbot," says Carlyle, who repeats the story in his own incomparable way—half caustic, half humorous; leaving a vivid impression of the incident on the minds of readers. The "manor" of Melford, according to this narrative, was extensive. I do not know whether its extent is known, but if by Elmset is meant the "village with a moated rectory," now usually spelt Elmsett, those oaks stood far enough from both Glemsford and Bury St. Edmunds. For Elmsett is close to Aldham Common, which we shall presently visit, and, as the crow flies, is about twelve miles from Long Melford Station.

If, after the manner of Professor Masson in his "Life of Milton," I were to indulge a hundred more or less



THE CHURCH PORCH, BERGHOLT.





plausible conjectures, I might stand here in Long Melford, thinking of the many happy holiday hours that Constable *may have spent* in this town, when he escaped awhile from the flogging usher at Lavenham. For that little town, whither I must soon wander, is but an hour's walk to the north-east, and Constable doubtless knew Long Melford well enough in his schooldays. He would find much here to take the eye. The old water-mill at the north end of the town, on a tributary of the Stour, would charm him, as such buildings always did ; certainly he would recognise a picture in the house opposite, of massive oaken timbers and diagonal brickwork, its upper rooms projecting two feet beyond the lower ; over its porch is inscribed the date 1610. He would delight, too, in the country between here and Acton, more thickly wooded than most districts in southern Suffolk, and in many of the older village churches hereabouts, so picturesquely situated in quiet graveyards among the fields, as at Acton itself. But, however this may be, he found subjects for his Suffolk pictures nearer home, and it is of Gainsborough, rather than of Constable, that men talk in Long Melford.

I found proof of this at the inn where I stayed, near the lane that leads to Acton and to Great Waldingfield. Here I met one who, as I subsequently learned, was, like Coleridge, "a noticeable man," chiefly for his tender solicitude for the fame of Gainsborough and for the pertinacity with which he urged the merits of *The Market Cart* against those of *The Haywain*. He talked much, and Gainsborough's pictures formed the staple of his talk. He took them, as it were, under his own wing. He challenged all comers, and was obviously a brave

knight. When routed in argument, which—*me judice*—he often was, he would cover his retreat by a skilfully contrived transition. But he was at you again instantly, fresh as ever and perhaps still more enthusiastic. “B——,” said the landlord, “is like the Duke of Wellington. He’s not to be beat.”

I doubt if another artist ever had such a champion. He reminded me of Goldsmith’s village statesmen, for his “news” was certainly much “older than his ale.” By him Pope’s dictum was usually inverted: he proposed things forgotten by his audience as things unknown to any save himself. “Sir,” he would suddenly burst out, “have I lived in Sudbury, where Thomas Gainsborough was born, or have you.” Here was a poser calling for politic evasion, for to confess one’s unfamiliarity with Sudbury was, in his eyes, to own yourself wholly ignorant of all matters touching Gainsborough, his family, his ways, or his works. Perhaps he claimed kinship with the artist’s descendants, but my memory is not clear on the point. He had, I think, three topics which he pressed most strongly on our attention. He knew all about Tom Peartree and Tom Peartree’s picture; he was sure no man in Ipswich knew anything about Gainsborough; he was even more sure that no man in Bath knew anything about Gainsborough’s pictures. He was spare to leanness; he had dark, restless eyes, which roved from face to face as if searching out objectors. No great drinker as to quantity, he punctuated every sentence with a sip of ale. This, I believe, was purely a habit, altogether apart from any desire to drink; moreover, he pressed his forefinger into his pipe almost between every draw, evidently a trick

generated by nervous excitement. He talked incessantly. Like Coleridge, he brushed aside the comment of others as wholly irrelevant to his subject: "If you will allow me to speak"—so ran the remonstrance whenever he was interrupted. I could write down his remarks at Long Melford, where I listened to him for an hour, almost verbatim, so vivid was the impression he created. Our remembrance of talk is often in inverse ratio to its worth. I shall always think of this eccentric, not as one who makes much public stir or declaims in the street, but as one moving from inn to inn, airing his prejudices over his ale or displaying his erudition in the bar parlour. Like the Greek poet in Athenæus, recently referred to by Mr. Andrew Lang, he may be set down for a chatterer on trifles.

The glory of Long Melford is its church. Like that at Lavenham, it is of noble proportions and of great size. It is certainly one of the finest Late Perpendicular churches in East Anglia. I may describe it as truly orthodox in its parts—chancel, nave, aisles, clerestory, chapels, and lofty tower at the west end, recently rebuilt, but still in tasteful harmony with the whole structure. Let us consider it, as I did on a day of brilliant sunshine in early autumn. I approached from Melford Green, that stretches with many undulations from the churchyard to the mill-bridge. I could not see the whole until close at hand; it is hidden partly by huge elms and chestnuts that flank the Green and partly by the old, red-brick hospital, for "twelve poor men and two poor women," founded in 1573 by Sir William Cordell. Even then I lingered under the shadow of its tower, and paced from south porch to Lady Chapel,



before grasping its dimensions. The Lady Chapel, built by the Cloptons of Kentwell Hall close by, is four centuries old and is distinct from the church itself, which is little short of two hundred feet in length and contains nearly one hundred large windows. The tower, battlemented and pinnaced, is perhaps a little dwarfed by the great length of the battlemented clerestory, which contains eighteen windows on each side—a number largely exceeding that in most parish churches, even of great size. The windows of the aisles reach almost from ground to roof.

Let us enter. To do so is to perceive at once the beauty of the nave arcade, the bold sculpture of arch and pier, the loftiness of the clerestory, and the richness of the windows. These windows were referred to incidentally in a paper read four years ago before the Royal Historical Society. For them the church was chiefly indebted to John Clopton, who, after escaping death on a charge of treason, retired to Kentwell Hall and spent time and substance in the adornment of his parish church. Once again we come in touch with the Flemings, two of whom—Antony Ammoson, an artist, and Henry Phelypp, a sculptor—wrought here together with the rector, a monk from Bury St. Edmonds. The windows which they designed and inserted have been justly styled a picture-gallery, with fifteenth-century portraits of judges and justices, mayors, citizens and burgesses, prior and priest—one and all represented as attired in the garb and after the manner of the day. They are evidently the work of no mean hand; nor can the monumental carving have been the produce of other than a man of genius. These portraits are thought to be

mostly from acquaintances of Clopton himself. The monuments are many. To Richard Almack the antiquary, who died in 1875, there is a tablet in the north aisle ; as also a brass to the memory of Francis Clopton, who died in 1558 and whose father rests beneath a slab near by. Here—I forget its precise position—is the altar tomb of Sir Hyde Parker, Bart., Vice-Admiral of the Blue Squadron and Commander-in-Chief at St. Lucie on March 25, 1780, and in the famous action off the Dogger Bank in 1781 : he went down in H.M.S. *Cato* in the following year, whilst bound for the East Indies, where he had been appointed Chief Naval Commander. In the chancel a tomb of marble, supporting a recumbent effigy with clasped hands, with a canopy above, is that of Sir William Cordell, who died in 1580. He resided at Melford Hall, a fine Elizabethan structure which still stands near the church, and which he probably built. His portrait, on a panel, hangs among others in that old home, where he entertained his Queen with lavish expenditure in 1578. He was Speaker of the House in the days of Mary ; and was afterwards Master of the Rolls.

Returning to the north aisle, I noticed upon the wall an alabaster carving. It represents the Adoration of the Magi. Some time back, as I was told, this carving was found under the floor of the church. Such a work of art must surely have been so hidden purposely, perhaps to save it from destructive hands. Not only is the carving good ; the sculptor entered into the spirit of the story, treating it with appropriate simplicity. Some lines from Longfellow came to mind as I looked at that eloquent handiwork, so strangely rescued and brought to light.

The poem, "The Three Kings," is beautiful as the alabaster.

To turn from that relic and enter the Clopton Chapel, at the east end of the north aisle, is but to turn from grave to grave, from monument to monument, from effigy to effigy. The grief which found utterance when those graves were opened is now as some "old, unhappy, far-off, thing"; we cannot say with Shelley :

Here pause. These graves are all too young as yet  
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned  
Its charge to each ;

for many generations have come and gone since the men and women whose memories are here enshrined were laid to rest ; the recessed tomb of Sir William Clopton bears the date 1446. Round the cornice of this chapel a scroll, carved and painted, is inscribed with verses in Gothic character by Lydgate of Bury St. Edmunds, whose works found so much favour in the eyes of Gray and Coleridge. Graves of like antiquity are in the Martyn Chapel, at the corresponding end of the south aisle. Masses for those who sleep in these chapels must often have been sung, for the church still shows the positions of six altars, marked by their remaining piscinæ. Fifty years after the death of Sir William Clopton the elder, his descendants built the Lady Chapel, placing it, as customary, at the east end of the chancel. This was long used as a school, but divine service is now conducted in it.

The rectors of Melford date from 1309, when the office was filled by Symon de Clayber, "presbiter," who, doubtless, like the rector in John Clopton's day, came



from the monastery that owned the manor. His many successors are less known to history than—for instance—the rectors of Hadleigh ; nor are their names familiar to the student of English literature. Concerning one of them, Dr. Robert Warren, a story is told in Walker's "Sufferings of the Clergy" and is referred to in Raven's "History of Suffolk." Warren was informed against during the inquiry touching "scandalous ministers," and, according to Walker, was ejected from the living in August 1641. He was also robbed of material possessions—"five very good horses and his household furniture." The story runs that as the rector was going homewards, after being turned out of his pulpit, one of his enemies walked before thumping a frying-pan in imitation of the sanctus bell, which the rector had been charged with using. Perhaps nothing is more strange, in this world of strange things, than the whirligig of religious opinion and prejudice. The Reformation in England, which consigned the sanctus bell and other ritualistic paraphernalia to the rubbish-heap, was effected, in the main, not by irresponsible zealots but by bishops of our church, whose successors show a yearly increasing tendency to sanction their use.

Kentwell Hall, faced by a fine avenue of limes, is, like Melford Hall, an Elizabethan house, having been built by Thomas Clopton, who died in 1597. Its ivy-mantled turrets and lofty mullioned windows are conspicuous ; it is surrounded by a moat, spanned by two bridges. A granddaughter of this Thomas Clopton was married, when almost a child, to a man famous in his day and generation and intimately associated with Suffolk life. Moreover, he was an eccentric and an ardent antiquarian,

and although not a Suffolk man by birth, is usually remembered when we call to mind the worthies of this county.

Simonds D'Ewes was born at Coxden in Dorsetshire in 1602. He was at school at Lavenham and in Bury St. Edmunds. From early days he was partial to sermons, which he sometimes wrote, and to all manner of research among what Poe has called "quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore." At Cambridge, where he subsequently studied, he was once nearly killed by a bell-rope in the gateway of St. John's College, which drew him high into the air. Anne Clopton of Kentwell Hall was his first wife, whom he married in 1626 and who brought him welcome increase of means. His independent position enabled him to pursue his historic investigations with unwearying industry : he searched the records of the Tower ; he studied law ; he apparently intended to write the history of Britain entirely from original sources. He resided for some years at Stowlangtoft, in Suffolk, in a house inherited from his father, Paul D'Ewes, who lies in the parish church. Though knighted by Charles I., he was a sturdy Puritan ; Carlyle calls him a man of "high-flown conscientiousness," adding that he was "really a most spotless man and High Sheriff"—an allusion to D'Ewes' appointment, in 1639, as High Sheriff of Suffolk. In the Long Parliament, which he entered in 1640, he sat as Member for Sudbury together with Sir Robert Crane, and soon became known for his irrelevant citation of innumerable fact and dates, a habit in which he persisted so obstinately that he was expelled when Colonel Pride effected his notorious "Purge," December 6, 1648. A year and a half later he died,

partly, perhaps, through the loss of his seat. His diary of the Long Parliament, consisting of notes of its sittings during five years, may be consulted, in five volumes, in the Harleian Library at the British Museum. He has always been interesting, and often profitable, to the historian. His "Autobiography and Correspondence," edited by J. O. Halliwell and published in 1845, is full of valuable matter, and is a store-house from which many volumes have been in part drawn. D'Israeli, in his "Curiosities of Literature," alludes to D'Ewes in the article on "Diaries," and quotes the words in which that indefatigable chronicler expressed his innermost aspirations. "Having now finished these volumes (his Journals) I have already entered upon other and greater labours, conceiving myself not to be born for myself alone." D'Ewes then enumerates his historical books that are to be, adding, in words characteristic of his wistful ambitions: "These I have proposed to myself to labour in, besides divers others, smaller works; like him that shoots at the sun, not in hopes to reach it but to shoot as high as possibly his strength, art, or skill will permit. So, though I know it impossible to finish all these during my short and uncertain life, having already entered into the thirtieth year of my age and having many unavoidable cares of an estate and family, yet, if I can finish a little in each kind, it may hereafter stir up some able judges to add an end to the whole:

"Sic mihi contingat vivere, sicque mori."

In his will D'Ewes ordered that his "precious library" should be preserved entire. This was done by the immediate successors to his estate; but it was sold by Sir



Simonds D'Ewes early in the following century to Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford.

Of D'Ewes' child-wife from Kentwell Hall we know little; his second wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir H. Willoughby. He was succeeded by his son, Willoughby D'Ewes; his only surviving daughter, Cecilia, married Sir Thomas D'Arcy, of St. Osyth in Essex. The D'Ewes baronetcy terminated with the death of Sir Jermyn D'Ewes in 1731. Readers may remember Carlyle's essay on "An Election to the Long Parliament," in which Simonds D'Ewes appears. The election for Ipswich was held under Simonds' writ as High Sheriff, on "an extreme windy morning." The temper of partisans was as boisterous as the elements; even the High Sheriff did not escape calumny, for he was charged with having been "damnedly base in all his carriage." Two Puritans were declared elected, so D'Ewes was probably little troubled by the accusation.

Later in the day, sauntering here and there in the long street, I saw little to suggest a paragraph. The town is well supplied with inns, hardly an unusual feature; but many are comparatively modern, and even from those of older date the romance has largely passed away. The romance of these old inns was, for the most part, inseparable from that of the highway, and we seek it in vain in days when the coach has almost left the road; when ladies seldom elope with their lovers; when everybody travels in feverish haste; when many of those who ride from town to town on bicycles seek the Temperance Hotel rather than the King's Head. So, turning into the lane near the Bull, I continued my search farther afield, where the road to Acton is bordered, in

places, with masses of pink willow-herb, and blue bugloss flowers profusely in clefts and hollows where the ground is much broken. Groups of tiny children strayed on the banks beside this pleasant winding road, plucking flowers as they passed : one, a ragged young scamp, might have sat for the boy, with driftwood in his hands, in Gainsborough's *Rustic Children*.

Turning at length into a field path, I came to Acton Church—a small sanctuary, in almost ruinous condition, with ampelopsis creeping over its walls, mingled with climbing roses. The tower, long ago deemed unsafe, was partly demolished in 1885, and is still unrestored. Under its shadow is a grave bearing this inscription :

Glory not in youth, for youth is frail,  
Glory not in health, for health must fail ;  
Glory not in wealth, for riches fly,  
Glory not in might, for might must die.

The words, for aught I know, may be seen in other churchyards, nor did I come hither to copy them. I came rather, as others have done before, to see what Boutell has described as “on the whole the finest military brass in existence.” I was disappointed ; the door was locked ; I could see little by peering through the windows, and time pressed. Not a soul was in sight, nor could I obtain the key on inquiry at the nearest cottage ; so I can only speak of this brass from repute. It is that of Robert de Bures, of whom I know nothing ; it bears the date 1302, and is remarkable as one of five effigies, wholly in chain-mail, yet remaining in England. Such relics have often been removed from their positions, and subsequently recovered and replaced, like the even

older brass in Gorleston Church ; but it is claimed that the brass of Robert de Bures is to-day where it was placed six hundred years ago. England is still, by comparison with any other country, very rich in these interesting memorials, so imperishable unless wantonly defaced, and where removal is unavoidable they should be carefully cherished, for they are invaluable to the student of local history. Another brass at Acton perpetuates the memory of Alice de Bures, and is thought to date from about 1425, or a little earlier than the oldest Clopton brass at Long Melford.



## CHAPTER XIV

### LAVENHAM

I LOOKED for pleasant hours in Lavenham, and was not disappointed. I entered the town in the evening, when men and maids were strolling in the growing gloom—a gloom that did not deepen into darkness. Stevenson would have called it “a fine night of stars.” But the stars presently paled before the rising moon; and when night settled down on Lavenham, a night of splendour, the outline of every object was clear as at noonday. The streets are mostly built on steep inclines. The centre of the town lies in a hollow, at the juncture of High Street and Hall Road, and in the lapse of time the houses have not only climbed to the hill-tops but have scattered themselves along the descending sides. Thus, from the High Street you descend to the railway station on one side and to Hall Road on the other, and, from the old Market Cross, Barn Street slopes steeply towards Water Street and the Priory—now a farmhouse, once the home of the Copingers, of whom more anon. I loitered in this street to enjoy the moonlight, which gilded the many old houses still left to teach the architecture of the past and to interest us with their carved figure-heads and beams, curious gables, or embossed fleur-de-lis and crown; of the latter I noticed a well-preserved example on one side of the Swan Hotel, and had previously seen

another elsewhere. I reached one end of Water Street only to retrace my steps, and the other end only to reverse the process ; hardly noticing the quarters as they spoke from the church tower and exchanging no word with my companion. I would fain write of that companion as cleverly as William Black once wrote of his ; but it is safer to quote his words than to rival them :

Too proud to give me perjured praise  
He hearkens as we onward tend,  
And ne'er disputes a doubtful phrase,  
Nor says he cannot comprehend.  
Might God such critics always send !  
He turns not to the left or right,  
But patient follows to the end—  
My shadow on a moonlight night.

The moonlight, and those chimes from the church tower, conspired to rob me of sleep. Without forethought, I had chosen an inn near the church, and can only hope that others doing likewise may pass the watches of the night less wakefully. Canon Scott, in his booklet on Lavenham, says that on the 21st of each June the peal of eight fine bells is rung "for the largest part of the day," and adds that the inhabitants of the Rectory then wish themselves "further away from the church." I can sympathise with that wish. In vain I had recourse to ancient recipes for sleep ; in vain I counted slowly ; in vain I repeated Mr. Lang's beautiful "Ballade of Sleep" as an invocation. I asked, with the poet, "Wilt thou not hear me, Sleep ?" But sleep would not hear, and I could only repeat :

The hours are passing slow,  
I hear their weary tread  
Clang from the tower, and go  
Back to their kinsfolk dead.

The beauty of the verses was small consolation for the lack of repose. Montaigne, who had searched his library for anecdotes "of sleeping" would have condoled with me in some measure, for he knew the horrors of its absence.

At breakfast, turning Canon Scott's pages, I was interested to find that the tenor in Lavenham tower is of rare excellence. It weighs twenty-three hundredweight, and bears the words "Miles Graye made me, 1625." Lavenham folk may be unaware that Miles Graye was a famous bell-founder of Colchester, whose bells hang in many a tower in East Anglia and elsewhere: six at Feering and five at North Ockenden came from his foundry. His fame, it would seem, excited envy in the breast of other bell-founders. Mr. Dutt, in his "Suffolk" copies an inscription on a bell at Wickham Market:

\* The monument of Graie,  
Is passed awaie,  
In place of it doth stand  
The name of John Brand, 1657.

Lavenham is proud of its church. It is politic, when visiting the town, to say little concerning the merits of that at Long Melford, lest you become involved in argument; and have to compare the two structures piecemeal—tower with tower, nave with nave, aisle with aisle, arch with arch. I promise the ground will be disputed inch by inch. This, on a close inspection of Lavenham Church, will not surprise you. It is yet another of those splendid sanctuaries, largely Perpendicular, for which Suffolk is famous. Approximately, its exterior length is equal to that at Long Melford, irrespective of the Lady



Chapel attached to the latter ; and there are points of resemblance between the external appearance of both churches, so far as concerns clerestory and aisles. But the tower at Lavenham, buttressed to the summit, is the commanding feature. Lofty as it is (141 feet), we are told that it would have been loftier but for an accident ; the architect fell from that great height, and his death deterred others from carrying the work further. There is evidence of the truth of this, for, as Canon Scott points out, the coats-of-arms on its exterior "come so exactly to the very top as to suggest that at least a few feet more were meant to be added." Here again, as at Belchamp Walter, we meet the cognisance of the De Veres, one of whom was associated with Thomas Spring in the erection of the present church. Below each window of the tower, the star-like mullet of the De Veres is inserted in the flintwork ; as also in the battlements of aisles and clerestory ; their shields are displayed in the south porch. They owned the manor for five centuries, from the Conqueror to Elizabeth.

Thomas Spring was a clothier of Lavenham. His name is writ large in this grand old church for which he laboured, particularly in the Spring Chapel. Other members of his family are remembered here ; their names are graven in brass, on the wall of nave and vestry ; but the name of Thomas Spring the younger is most closely associated with the church and tower. The chapel, built in 1525, is on the south side of the chancel ; its exterior—buttress, windows and battlements—harmonise with the exterior of the south aisle. The Spring arms are in the spandrels of the door ; the family pew is still shown at the east end of the north aisle. Spring

recorded his wish to lie in a tomb before St. Katherine's altar in this church. Tomb and altar are alike gone; but the spot is thought to be identical with the site of the pew, where the existing screenwork, of Renaissance, perhaps Flemish, workmanship, may mark the parclose.

A brass near the north door, to the memory of Allayne Dister, who died in 1534, is so curiously inscribed that I was glad to find time to copy it before matins :

Contynuall prayse these lynes in brasse  
Of Allayne Dister here,  
A clothier vertuous while he was  
In Lavenham many a yeare,  
For as in lyfe he loved best  
The poore to clothe and feede,  
So withe the riche and all the rest  
He neighbourlie agreed,  
And did appoint before he died  
A spial yearlie rent  
Which shoulde be every Whitsontide  
Among the poorest spent.

On the brass is graven the figures of Allayne Dister and his family; a scroll, issuing from his mouth, is inscribed with the words "In manus Tuas, Domine, concedo animum meum." The modern spelling of the word Lavenham on so old a brass is remarkable, for during intervening periods the word was written far differently; Foxe spells it Lanham; Defoe, Lenham. Like the name of Weller, its orthography evidently varied with the taste of the speller.

Five persons, including the clergy, heard matins that morning. To my sorrow, I was seated near the chancel, so was unable to contemplate the grandeur of the nave arcade of six bays, considered the most finely proportioned

in Suffolk. The pier-shafts, supporting gracefully moulded arches, have elaborately floriated Tudor capitals; whilst the spandrels between arch and arch are adorned with carved panelling. Each bay of the clerestory has two three-light windows; these, once wholly filled with stained glass, are now mostly colourless, and consequently, as Canon Scott justly remarks, the nave is even too well lighted. The roofs of aisles and nave, similar in design, are thought to be of chestnut-wood, but are not so elaborately wrought as to evoke admiration in so fine a church. Monuments are few; one, on the north wall of the chancel, is to the younger of two Copingers who were successively rectors of Lavenham. Its general design is commonplace: rector and wife kneel face to face, engaged in prayer; beneath are their children, eleven in all, with skulls in their hands. This Copinger, who died in 1622, is mentioned in Fuller's "Church History," in that quaint phraseology which we enjoy whenever we open his pages. He tells us that Copinger was for forty-five years the "painful parson" here at Lavenham; that he was skilful in adjusting differences among his communicants; and that he had plenty of money, which he freely distributed. The word "painful" is open to the charge of ambiguity. Fuller probably meant his readers to know that Copinger was industrious in the discharge of duty; but it may be suggested that Copinger's hearers, as Spurgeon once said in a different connection, suffered the word of exhortation in more senses than one.

Copinger was succeeded by another rector of the same family, at whose death, in 1644, Sir Simonds D'Ewes, then patron of the church, conferred the advowson upon



William Gurnall, whose name is more widely known than that of any other Rector of Lavenham. Many thousands of readers are familiar with the title, at least, of a book published in 1843. It is "A Collection of Rare Jewels. From the Mines of William Gurnall. Dug up and deposited in a casket by Arthur Augustine Rees." The book is extracted from Gurnall's more voluminous work "The Christian in Complete Armour," which he put forth, in three volumes, between 1655 and 1662 ; and of which several editions were promptly sold. There were giants of exposition in the land in those days. The whole of Gurnall's work, based on a series of sermons, is concerned with the last few verses of the Epistle to the Ephesians ; its title—as Macaulay says of the title of Nares's "Burghley"—"is as long as an ordinary preface" ; it describes the work as "A Treatise of the Saint's War against the Devil ; wherein a discovery is made of that grand enemy of God and his people, in his policies, power, seat of his empire, wickedness, and chief designs he hath against the saints," &c. Gurnall was a Puritan, and expressed the theology of his day ; but he is far more interesting than many of his contemporaries. Spurgeon, no mean judge of such writings, considered Gurnall eminently suitable for quotation ; "he is sententious," he once wrote, "and withall pictorial, and both in a high degree." I think this work must have been known to Bunyan ; it possibly suggested passages in the "Pilgrim's Progress," first published several years after the last of Gurnall's volumes. Gurnall had been sometime "minister" at Sudbury before his removal to Lavenham, as he mentions in a letter ; but his early ministerial life is little known, nor

does it concern me here. Rector in troubled days, he contrived to avoid open rupture with his superiors in Church and Parliament by a shrewd compromise. He preached and visited, but would not wear the surplice—"the ghost of a linen decency" as Milton called it in the year of Gurnall's institution—so the reading of prayers was wholly performed by his curate. This, however, must have been in his latter days, when the surplice was reintroduced.

Gurnall died in October, 1679, and was buried at Lavenham; but no monument to him is known in the church or town. His books, and the books of others, have kept his memory green. An edition of "The Christian in Complete Armour" was published, in two octavos, by Dove, the well-known publisher in St. John's Square. An "Inquiry" into the facts of Gurnall's life, by H. M'Keon, appeared at Woodbridge in 1830, and the late Bishop Ryle prefaced his edition of this savoury old Puritan's work with an interesting narrative.

The name of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, whose gift of the living to Gurnall was "much to the benefit of the town in many waies," occurs frequently in the story of Lavenham. Like Constable, he was sent awhile to the old Grammar School in Lady Street, now used as a factory for the weaving of horse-hair. Sir Simonds' account of the death of his first-born son is very touching; it is in the second volume of the "Autobiography and Correspondence." The child was baptized in the church here by the rector, Ambrose Copinger, in the presence of members of the Clopton family, relatives of his mother. A fortnight later the child died. "I attended him fasting the

greatest part of the day," the father records, "and when he had given up the ghost my dearest and myself could not refrain from many tears, sighs, and mournings." And so the "chrisom child" was laid in a "little, little grave" in the chancel of Lavenham Church. There, a brass in the floor near the altar-rails represents the infant in his chrisom robe, in which he was probably buried. The inscription is in Latin.

One of D'Ewes's predecessors in the High Sherifffdom of Suffolk was Sir William Spring, who lived at Lavenham in the days of Elizabeth—those "spacious days" in which men lived and moved to such excellent purpose. In 1578 Elizabeth visited Lavenham during a Royal Progress, as she visited Bures and Long Melford, and was entertained here by the High Sheriff. From a tract in the British Museum, penned by that adventurous soldier and poet, Thomas Churchyard, we learn how brilliant a cavalcade met and escorted the Queen on this occasion, "a comely troupe and a noble sight to beholde." So anxious were the men of Suffolk for the honour of their county that, as Churchyard records, they bought all the silks and velvets they could procure, in order to convert them into fine clothing; among other features he mentions "two hundred young gentlemen cladde all in white velvet coates."

The cottagers near the churchyard gate had dined ere I passed their open doors on my way from the church. We exchanged a cheery time o' day, and I think they were pleased when I turned for a last look at their magnificent tower. Like all structures of perfect balance and proportion, it seemed to expand as I contemplated it; I could almost have supposed it loftier than on the



previous evening. But time pressed, and I prepared to quit its precincts, perhaps for ever. I was sorry to leave the town. I presently found myself before the old Guildhall, long the hall of the Guild of Corpus Christi, and the meeting-place of the clothiers of Lavenham. It is a timber-framed house, fairly preserved; on the corner-post, a close scrutiny reveals a figure of its founder, the fifteenth Earl of Oxford. The Hall, now attached to the Primitive Methodist Chapel—a glaring contrast in red—has foundation walls of rubble and brick, bearing the heavy oaken timbers of the framework. It was long a prison. Howard, who visited the town in 1784, wrote of it as Lavenham Bride-well, recording its insanitary and insecure condition and its lack of straw and water.

My way towards the little river Brett led me down Shilling Street. Here, on the left-hand side, stands a “double-house,” of plain aspect, but interesting for its literary associations. In 1786, one Isaac Taylor removed from Red Lion Street in London and fixed his home in Lavenham, renting this residence in Shilling Street for six pounds per annum—a fact which should interest its present inmate. He is remembered here for his “Specimens of Gothic Ornament selected from the Parish Church of Lavenham in Suffolk,” a quarto published in London in 1796. Here, too, he commenced his well-known series of engravings for Boydell’s “Shakespeare,” once so often thumbed. He was ardent in all matters touching the education of his children, as was also his wife, and their labours bore excellent fruit. Two of their daughters, Ann and Jane, were the chief authors of “Original Poems for Infant Minds by Several Young

Persons," by which they received fifteen pounds and a deal of fame. The family subsequently settled at Ongar, where Isaac Taylor was for some time Congregational minister; there he died, as did also his daughter Jane; his memorial is in the church in which he taught. The home, from those early days at Lavenham to the father's death in 1829, must have been conspicuous for the industry of its inmates. Some of Taylor's books were familiar to all readers two generations back, but we seldom meet them now when we search the book-stalls in town. He wrote "The Biography of a Brown Loaf," "Picturesque Piety," "Bunyan explained to a Child," and much else; but was destined to be eclipsed by a yet more famous son. Since his death, he has often been referred to as "Taylor of Ongar," to distinguish him from the son who bore his name.

Isaac Taylor the younger—whose likeness, in crayon, is in the National Portrait Gallery—was born at Lavenham on August 17, 1787. His early studies in the arts of drawing and engraving were not without benefit, but it was as an author rather than an artist that he was destined to make a name still honourably remembered. He drew his own portrait and that of his sister Jane; he drew some pictures for Boydell's "Illustrations of Holy Writ"; he translated Theophrastus' "Characters" and illustrated them with woodcuts from his own hand. His life was one of quiet industry, devoted almost wholly to religious and philosophic meditation and to the embodying of its results in his many volumes. His days were mostly passed in Essex. Removing from Lavenham, he lived successively at Colchester, at Ongar, and

at Stanford Rivers, a scattered parish beside the Roding, where he settled in 1825.

The bent of Taylor's mind was strongly influenced by the perusal, in early life, of the works of Sulpitius Severus and of Bacon's "De Augmentis." The latter, we can well believe, did much to widen his outlook and deepen his seriousness. Its effect may undoubtedly be traced in many passages from his pen—especially, perhaps, in his volume on "Fanaticism" first published in 1833. Let the reader judge: "The habitude of positive pain, as well as that of mere privation, brings its relief also; for there is a torpor, partly of the nerve, but chiefly of the mind, which more and more blunts physical sensibility; and there is, too, an art learned in the school of chronic suffering, which teaches so to shift the burden of anguish as that it may not anywhere gall to the quick. Moreover, there is a power of abstraction from bodily sensations, called into exercise by long experience, and which may at length, even while matter and mind continue partners, almost set the conscious principle at large from its sympathy with mere flesh nerve. Pain, at its first onset, condenses the soul upon a point; or brings the whole of the sensitive faculty to the one centre of anguish; but the habit of pain loosens this concentration and allows the mind a liberty of movement."\* Here is closeness of reasoning and sententious expression largely typical of an age that has passed away; for what is in some respects a contrast, an example of scientific accuracy and lucidity of statement, we may turn to Huxley's "Hume." Taylor's methods are those of John Foster, Robert Hall, and other clever men of his age—men whom

\* "Fanaticism." A new edition. Revised 1843.





THE GLEBE FARM.



he knew and honoured and with whom he collaborated in the *Eclectic Review*. That periodical, now seldom alluded to, was edited by Josiah Conder from 1805 till 1834; it ran till 1868. It was mostly read by Dissenters, whose views it chiefly voiced.

By writers to whom Taylor is a name only, he is usually referred to as the author of "The Natural History of Enthusiasm." First issued in 1829, the book ran through many editions, and was one of few really popular works on such topics. He wrote ably on "Spiritual Despotism," and strongly against the Oxford Tractarians. Unlike his father, he was a Churchman from conviction, but one who failed to see that any advantage could be derived from the attempt to remodel the Church in conformity with its precepts and practices when notoriously corrupt. In this respect, if in this alone, Taylor had many points of resemblance to a once more famous writer, Dr. Cumming, whose "Lectures for the Times," exposing the errors of Romanism and Tractarianism, appeared during Taylor's busiest period of authorship.

Between Isaac and Jane Taylor there were many ties of affection. Not robust in health, Taylor visited Ilfracombe from time to time with his sister, whose "Memoirs and Correspondence" he was afterwards to edit. Like many authors, his life-story is, in the main, the story of his books; the lives of few English authors have been more free from blemish. He died at Stanford Rivers on June 28, 1865; the death of his learned descendant, Canon Isaac Taylor, is still a very present sorrow to many.



## CHAPTER XV

### "A CORNER IN ARCADY"

THE afternoon was waning as I passed out of Lavenham and came into the open meadows beside the Brett. Many cows were cropping the rich aftermath lazily, as though appetite were appeased and they must perforce graze for occupation rather than for nourishment. A lark, whose

. . . sound went with the river as it ran  
Out through the fresh and flourish'd lusty vale,

like the voice of the bird in Dunbar's "Merle and Nightingale," rose before me as I reached the waterside; I watched its spiral ascent so long as its tiny form was distinguishable in the blue. Children, frolicking in a spinney hard by, diverted my attention; their voices pursued me merrily as I followed the windings of that erratic watercourse. Until it nears Hadleigh the Brett can hardly be called a river—some, perhaps, would deem it a small stream—but it wanders through very charming country and traverses districts of truly bucolic rusticity. Its banks are shaded by willows, like the banks of all streams in Constable's country; the purple loose-strife strikes root deeply in its sandy soil, and displays its flowers so profusely as to be conspicuous from afar. Near Lavenham, I found the narrow channel of the Brett—

or rather, one of the “three heads” of that river—almost waterless; no rain had fallen upon the thirsty land since I was in Sudbury, and tributary streamlets were dry. But as I neared Brent Eleigh the water swelled in volume until a coracle might have floated on its bosom, or it might have served for some fairy regatta, led by the state-barge of Titania.

If not in Fairyland, I was at least in Arcadia. We find Arcadia, often enough, where we seek it. We should know the land of our desires, and direct our steps accordingly; we should seek Arcadia where we may reasonably expect to find it—far from the busier highways of life, far from the frigid, flowerless territory of discontent, often so desert-like and wide that he who strays within its confines is like to perish. It is possible to travel a thousand miles and be farther from Arcadia than when we set out upon our search. Some are ever seeking it, and never able to come to a knowledge of its whereabouts. Each summer they renew the search, wandering farther and farther from home; forgetting, we must suppose, that they leave behind them a land

Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,  
And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes glide;

for if a man can find no Arcadia in England he will not readily discover it elsewhere. Perhaps it is only to be found by that small remnant who leave the town behind them when they take the road. Mr. Arthur Grant has found it in the green lanes and old-world villages of Hertfordshire, the shire so warmly beloved by Walton and Lamb, and I will vouch for the accuracy of the location. Stevenson found it in widely parted lands,

because he carried the spirit and atmosphere of Arcadia with him wherever he went ; Walton, that genial father of a fine old school of Arcadians, found it wherever there ran a stream wherein he might angle ; Lamb found it in Hertfordshire because he was one of those who, as Stevenson himself has said, ramble in search of " certain jolly humours " rather than of the picturesque. But there are never lacking men like those rich ones in Keats's poem—men to whom

red-lined accounts

Are richer than the songs of Grecian years,

and how should such know where to seek Arcadia ? How profoundly wretched they will be if they ever find it !

I have reached a quiet country, almost within sight of the village of Brent Eleigh ; it is as surely Arcadian as any country I know. The fall of the hammer on the blacksmith's anvil comes faintly to the ear, for the forge is far away and many intervening trees impede the undulating air. A child from the village has wandered thus far to wade in the cool stream. Unconscious of my presence, missie has removed shoes and stockings in a trice, and has waded from side to side with obvious relish, not, I take it, wholly unmixed with fear of impending chastisement should discovery ensue. She is not the least pleasing feature of the scene. For the rest, there is almost utter silence—the silence of early evening in the neighbourhood of water that creeps rather than runs ; before any voice is heard calling the cows from the pasture ; before the swifts come abroad for their last flight, always the noisiest of the day ; before the beetles wheel hither and thither, whirring or humming



as they go, sometimes bumping against you with surprising violence ; before the rooks caw crisply as they gather to their resting-places in the high elms. No time of day is more quiet than those moments when we realise that another afternoon has “dropped in the shadowy gulf of bygone things,” yet hesitate to say that evening has fallen once again. But the earth is never wholly silent ; always some insect is on the wing ; some bird is restless in a neighbouring coppice, or even the gentlest rain makes audible patter among a million leaves. When we meet perfect silence it will be in that land where there is perfect rest.

The little wader comes ashore ere long ; shoes and stockings are again pulled on, and missie trots lightly over the bridge and into the shadow of a beech that towers beside this tributary of the Brett. The sun is almost on the horizon, and the whole heaven is lit with those wondrous hues which so many have striven to paint and so few have faithfully painted. As there is no silence near the earth, so there is no permanence of form or hue in the sky above. The last hour has shown colours in cloudland of infinite gradations in tone and tint, from brightest gold to deepest purple, and even in the higher cirrus the configuration of each outer fringe is transformed as I watch it. The sinking sun seems to spin around with increasing velocity until, at the last, it drops so suddenly beneath the verge of the horizon as to leave me pondering the precise cause of the optical delusion.

It is time to pass on. I linger awhile on the bridge, in no mood to hasten from such sylvan solitude. There is wind enough to stir the leaves of this fine beech to music ; and light sufficient to show the winding road that leads

me to Brent Eleigh. The neighbourhood, like others far less lovely, has its tragic memories. Somewhere between Lavenham and Brent Eleigh—I believe the exact spot is unknown—James Spring, who figures in effigy on the family brass in Lavenham Church, was slain in a fight in 1493. A little to the south-west lies Washmore Green, where grim sport was witnessed in those far-off, barbarous days so foolishly lauded by ignorant folk. For when the pastime of bull-baiting was—after much opposition—ousted from Lavenham by James Buck, the rector of the town, the “sport” was continued at Washmore Green, where crowds composed of all classes, on foot or on horseback, watched the bull being literally torn to pieces by dogs trained for that purpose. This bull-baiting was practised until about seventy years ago, when it was very properly abolished by the local magistrates.

Early in the morning I go in quest of a curious relic. But, dilatory Rambler that I am, I follow a circuitous course to the churchyard, whither I am bound. Walls, blues, small tortoiseshells and meadow browns flit among the hawkweed and poppies by the roadside ; blue scabious and yellow agrimony, valerian and willow-herb are plentiful in this valley-like depression into which I have strayed, and I am tempted to arrange a posy by the river's bank, to send to folk at home. I was startled just now by a merry laugh. A boy came out from a cottage doorway to fetch water from the stream, and following his glance I saw the cause of his mirth. It was a family removal—such a removal as we look for in Arcadia. A van had been piled with goods and chattels ; the family, young and old, had contrived to dispose

themselves among the furniture with commendable ingenuity. One stout horse drew this dead and living load with apparent ease, and the high spirits of the party were undeniable. Well, they may perhaps find a new home in a less pleasant district; circumstances may go hard with each ere they are much older; presently, too, there will be the inevitable vacant chair. I wished them a good morning as they passed, which they cheerily returned. Perhaps I should rather have wished them God-speed, and the best of fortune's favours in the land whither they were bound.

The curious relic which I mentioned is none other than a wayside library. In the quaint little church, on the northern side of Brent Eleigh, is a monument to Edward Coleman, who died in 1737, and bequeathed to the parish some fifteen hundred volumes. These were long kept in the church, but are now in a small building near the churchyard gate. This library is rich in works by classic and revered names; but many are in a dilapidated condition. Some have been acquired by the British Museum; those that remain show how valuable the collection is even now. Many are ponderous tomes, and I smile as I think of Lamb, who could only read Beaumont and Fletcher "in folio," and ask myself, as I glance over the titles of these books, how many of their "crabbed old authors" were beloved by Elia and how many he would have classed as "books which are no books—*biblia a-biblia*." Here is an author of local interest; Tillotson, in three volumes folio, must have reminded many that their broad-minded author was once, for a brief while, rector of Kedington, a few miles to the west. This edition of his works was not published



till long after his death ; it is worthy of note that for the sermons alone the publisher paid 2500 guineas to Tillotson's widow. Here, too, is Bishop Reynolds ; here is Cave's " Fathers," here his " Bibliotheca Ecclesiastica." Here is Augustine—a row of folios in sorry guise ; here Cyril of Alexandria ; here Ray's " Historia Plantarum " ; here Brady's " Introduction to History " ; and here an Erasmus, in eleven folios, is at least a noble monument to a greatly honoured name. Actually, as figuratively, the dust has fallen deeply upon these volumes of late ; but they are interesting to the present vicar, and I may one day see them more worthily classified and housed. There are two somewhat similar collections of books within a few miles of Brent Eleigh—both, like the Coleman Library here, bequeathed by divines of repute to their respective parishes. The Plume Library at Maldon and the Harsnett Library at Colchester contain many of the same authors as are found in this collection at Brent Eleigh. Some of the editions before me are now rare, and are worthy of all that may be done to preserve them for the use of future generations. But will those generations use them ? The vicar's wife—who with great kindness permits me to rummage at will among these old fellows in leather—shares my scepticism on this point, and thinks it doubtful whether any one of these books will rival a halfpenny newspaper in the eyes of the rising generation.

The Coleman Library did not interest the soldier on furlough at the inn. But he shared my admiration for the country hereabouts, and wished, now that his marches and battles are for the most part over, to " settle down " and ruralise at Brent Eleigh. Ah ! if only he had stuck

to the land as a lad ! He might have known a far happier, if a quieter life—he might, he thought, have grown to the spot and passed his last days in his own cottage with his family around him. As it is, he fought for old England in Afghanistan, and knows a few things about that country which would look fine in the reading, if he could but set them down. He owned that warfare has its compensations for the few who emerge from it morally and physically unscathed, and for the still fewer who win promotion. Two possibilities in a soldier's career he regarded as mere haphazard, like the spinning of a coin. You may receive a wound, which you carry to your grave, the first time you look into the enemy's eyes over crossed swords ; or you may get no scratch in ten encounters ; and similarly, you may win a medal and an immortality of repute when first you remove a wounded brother under fire, or you may do it more times than you care to remember, and your name shall never be mentioned in a despatch. Soldiering, like life generally, is all a lottery. A man's promotions are no measure of his merits. This he illustrated by a line from Dryden, arguing that although none but the brave *deserve* the fair, many a timid man has wed a fair lady, and has preserved his timidity to the end.

I listened to the soldier's philosophy until he waxed proverbial as Martin Tupper, when I bade him good morning and walked briskly to the meeting of the ways from Preston and Monk's Eleigh. Here stretches a fine prospect over the leafy valley of the Brett ; and more directly westward the landscape swells upwards until, on the not very distant horizon, the tower of Lavenham Church, at once statuesque and columnar, stands clearly

relieved against the blue sky. The sky is indeed so blue, the clouds that fleck it so white, and the air so crisp and exhilarating that I feel little disposed to hasten down into Monk's Eleigh, whither I am bound. Moreover, there are reapers among the wheat in a neighbouring field, and the gradual diminution of the standing corn has deprived some rabbits of their hiding-places. To remain among the wheat is to be mown down with the straw, to run from cover is to be shot by the ready rifles. The St. Bartholomew of rabbits has come, as it comes each year at reaping-time, and as I rest beneath a high hedge—looking, from time to time, to where Monk's Eleigh Church peeps above the trees in the valley below—I watch the passing of several rabbits from life to death. Here was a comment on the soldier's talk; for nowhere is life more uncertain, or its rewards more problematical, than among the denizens of hedgerow and field.

I have heard two strange, fragmentary yarns concerning Monk's Eleigh; but have no notion as to whether they are anywhere substantially recorded in print. One I heard by the roadside, and will repeat it first. Many years ago, a lady, straying in fields near the village, went farther than she intended, and night came down ere she attempted to retrace her steps. When, at length, she sought the point from which she had set out, she found she had lost her way; no soul was abroad; scarcely a sound reached her ears to tell where, in the darkness, Monk's Eleigh lay, and the lady saw every prospect of being benighted in the open country, with no bed save the ground, and no roof save the shelter of hedge or tree. She was, as the old novelists used to say, "about to



abandon herself to all the horrors of despair," when she heard the sound of a far-off bell. Thinking it was probably the sound of a bell in Monk's Eleigh Church tower, she followed its leading, and presently, after sundry divagations into wrong footpaths, she came out into the open road, and recognised a cottage not far from the village. Grateful for deliverance from at least an unpleasant predicament, and sensible of the part played by the bell in her escape, she bequeathed an annual sum to keep in repair the clock in Monk's Eleigh Church ; and the bell that tops the angle-turret, which you may see from a long distance, is a witness to the truth of the story. This, I doubt not, is in the main a pretty piece of fiction and no mean tribute to the fertility of rustic invention. I repeat the story as it was told to me by an ancient native, almost under the shadow of the lime-trees which skirt the churchyard, and those who know the authentic version will perhaps thank me for having placed on record so fantastic a variation on the original theme.

The other story was referred to in brief by Mr. Vincent Redstone, in a paper read before the Royal Historical Society in 1902. It takes us back to the fifteenth century, and illustrates the difficulties encountered by those called upon to enforce the law in days when culprits relied as much upon might as upon diplomacy. It appears that one Richard Talbot of Monk's Eleigh had obtained a writ of subpœna against a widow at Bildeston, named Agnes Motte. The difficulty of serving such a writ was often great, and Talbot entrusted the task to his son, who set out for Bildeston accompanied by another. The writ was apparently delivered ; but troubles were ahead.

Dame Motte, incensed by the proceeding, roused her neighbours, who flocked together to the rescue, and young Talbot and his companion were roughly handled. The Bildeston folk confronted the pair with drawn weapons, and Talbot narrowly escaped with his life. The sequel has its ludicrous side. Anxious, perhaps, to avoid the consequences of actual bloodshed, the little mob compelled the two men to kneel down, and in that posture to devour the entire writ, both wax and parchment.

I was still in Arcadia when I reached Monk's Eleigh. Figuratively speaking, the village is falling into decay; Goldsmith, could he visit it now, would surely lament its decline in tender couplets. Some forty years ago, I was told, "Monks Illey" contained about seven hundred souls; it now numbers two hundred less. After skirting the church on its western side the road opens out near the village pump. Here, before the old Swan Inn, the stocks were till recently preserved; many a parishioner doubtless felt their clutches because he had behaved improperly in the church hard by, or had brawled o' nights, or beaten the constable, or otherwise demonstrated that he was a man of spirit. In those days a tall spire surmounted the church tower; this was removed some fifty years ago; but the Early English font, once richly coloured, and a pulpit, carved four centuries back, still remain to testify how ancient is the church when compared with other structures in the parish. Go where we will among our older English villages, we may safely hazard two guesses. We may take it that the oldest inn is twice the age of the most ancient cottage in its vicinity, and that the parish church is twice as old again. The

most frequent exception is where we find the church so old that no neighbouring building is one quarter its age.

Monk's Eleigh lies in a hollow nook; it somehow reminded me of Aldbury, in the west of Hertfordshire—perhaps because its open space is roughly triangular, and because, moreover, from the centre of both villages I have looked upwards to the higher corn-country, yellow in the August sunshine and dotted with the figures of reapers about to lay the harvest low. I confess, however, with becoming shamefacedness, that I waxed unconscionably lazy in Arcadian Suffolk; the mere senses of observation were enjoyed to the full, but I became too dilatory to scribble copiously by the wayside. At the inn, also, I idled sadly. I found comfortable refuge from the heat of the open road when I turned into a small hostel at the south-east extremity of the village; and could pen a eulogistic, if faulty sonnet, on the excellence of the ale which was set before me on a tiny salver. The room was hung with interesting prints; and other curios were obviously placed to take the eye to the best advantage. There was, I remember, a large engraving of Charles James Fox with his hand on a portfolio, and his features—so suggestive of high living—set in a vacuous stare which by no means did justice to that fervid orator. There was, too, a picture of Charles II. landing on the beach at Dover, etched by William Woollett, “historical engraver to His Majesty”; and a framed miracle in woolwork, so complex in texture and design as to speak volumes for the worker's perseverance in the accomplishment of trivialities. I do not care to own how long I stayed in that parlour, turning appreciatively from



print to print, or stretched at ease in an arm-chair which Cowper might have envied or the once-famous Eliza Cook might have praised in galloping stanzas. Why do such moments pass so quickly? Why cannot we sit thus for ever, watching young and old as they come and go about their business or listening to the interchange of talk between patriarchs who bemoan the times over their ale as evening lengthens? So, at least, we think as we linger over a cigar after lunch or turn in here awhile to rest after a hot ramble. But rest and refreshment lead at length to fresh energy, and ere the long hand on the grandfather's clock has completed its circle we bestir ourselves again and sally forth in quest of further experiences, regarding the hour that is past as a chapter read and known, and therefore of less interest than that which is to come. The best of adventures, like the morrow, lie always in the immediate future.

Between Monk's Eleigh and Chelsworth is the meeting-place of three feeders of the Stour. Here two small tributaries join the Brett, and the three streams flow as one towards Hadleigh and thence hasten more quickly to empty themselves in the Stour near Higham. Chelsworth—where every Rambler loses time on the ivy-mantled brick bridge of (I think) five spans, at the spot where those waters meet—is an old-world village full of charming nooks, and I advise readers to shun it if, like most folk, they are in haste to be elsewhere. The antiquarian will seek the church, where, beneath a triangular canopy, and between two decorated windows and two piscinæ, is the deeply recessed monument to Sir John de St. Philibert, who was lord of the manor five and a half centuries ago, but concerning whom

history has little to tell us. The monument itself is curiously situated, being so placed that a projection is made beyond the outer side of the aisle in which it stands. Is there an old legend in the village, such as we heard at Bures, to tell us that Sir John was buried thus in order that he might lie neither outside nor inside of the church ?

## CHAPTER XVI

### HADLEIGH

DR. J. M. BARRIE, with even more than his wonted humour, once refused to divulge his tobacconist's address. "You may not," he wrote, "be worthy to smoke the Arcadia Mixture." I had recently read "My Lady Nicotine," and this pleasantry came to mind with ludicrous, if far-fetched, application as I stood on Gallow's Hill, and looked down upon Hadleigh that sprawled across the valley below, bathed in sunshine despite some clouds that threatened rain before night. For (I write with becoming seriousness) neither you, the reader, nor I, "the present humble scribe" as Grant Allen puts it, may be worthy to loiter in the ancient streets of Hadleigh, much less to intrude in its holy places. On occasion, a tourist may swagger here and there in this "royal town," ignorant, we will suppose, of its claims to distinction; and may chatter nonsense in the church with superlative effrontery, as I have known such do elsewhere. But humbler folk, solicitous for a little knowledge rather than for much self-assertion, will remember that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Hadleigh is holy ground. The King, the martyr, the dramatist, the ecclesiastic, the essayist, the Puritan, the Ritualist, are all remembered here. Here, indeed, we feel the truth of Carlyle's contention that history is,



in the main, biography—take the human element from history and what is left ? A long line of rectors, curates, and lay residents of Hadleigh are honorably remembered in literary or ecclesiastical history. Some were born in the town ; some, born elsewhere, came here to labour awhile and were presently removed to higher spheres of usefulness ; others, after gaining distinction, brought great reputations with them to Hadleigh, and were destined to find a resting-place in the church or churchyard. It would, I think, be difficult to name any town in England, equally small, associated with so many celebrated men. The lives of Hadleigh worthies would fill several large volumes, and should be interesting reading if obvious trivialities were left in the inkpot. But such a series is likely to remain unwritten. We may not be worthy to write “The Worthies of Hadleigh.”

Let us leave even their names to be recalled to-morrow. I had been many hours on foot ere I caught sight of the windmill on the hillside overlooking the town, and had strayed so erratically after leaving Monk’s Eleigh that I was glad to linger at the tea-table, where even Kelly’s “Suffolk” provided entertaining reading, and the waitress owned a face and figure that deserved a second glance. My way into the town had led me over the little bridge that spans the Brett, past the Angel Inn, and near the old Place Farm, believed to stand close to the site of a nunnery, if only because an adjacent thoroughfare was long called Lady Lane. From the bridge, the main street of Hadleigh stretches from end to end of the town, only a portion bearing the orthodox name of High Street. Hadleigh, like so many towns of mellow age, presents a curious frontage to the eye as you walk its

streets ; its tenements are reminiscent of perhaps every decade from Elizabeth to Victoria. From a local guide, which I consulted at the inn, I extract the following : " Even now, there are many private houses of much interest in the town, built chiefly of timber, with the interstices filled up with wattle-work and plaster, and bearing traces of the sixteenth, fifteenth, and probably also of the fourteenth centuries ; and several, as might be expected, are of the seventeenth century, having carved wooden corbels supporting windows, or the wide eaves characteristic of the period. The fronts of many of the houses are pargetted—that is, are covered with plaster, ornamented with raised patterns, the favourite devices being the Tudor rose and the royal arms supported by a lion and a unicorn, which mark the period during which this mode of ornamentation prevailed, the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I."

I wish I could describe, as fully as it deserves, the inn where I passed several pleasant hours at Hadleigh. Like many in which I have slept in other counties, it was far larger than its exterior led me to suppose. On the ground floor, and in the forefront of the building, the passage and a side parlour seemed to monopolise the available space ; but the out-buildings extended so far behind that perhaps a hundred yards is not an over-estimate of their extent from back to front. Immediately behind the parlour was an open quadrangle ; the ground floor was occupied by various side-rooms and the offices requisite to a large inn ; on the first floor a balustraded balcony ran round a suite of bedrooms, in one of which I slept as soundly as ever in my life. The balcony, like the quadrangle beneath, was tastefully set

about with flowers and ferns and shrubs, and the fragrance of the place as night fell, and the watering-can or hose had been freely applied, was very pleasing to the senses. Here Shenstone might have penned another poem in praise of inns; here Hazlitt might have loved to be "the gentleman in the parlour"; here Johnson might surely have found the Suffolk mutton cooked to his liking.

Still farther back, behind rooms and offices and court-way and stables, stretched a delightful bowling green, fringed with arbours and tables for rest and refreshment. And so, tea being over, I sallied out with some cigarettes, and an acquaintance of a chirruping disposition, to watch the ancient game of bowls, being a sorry bungler at the pastime myself. I was early; the evening game had not yet commenced, but a few players had already assembled, and I gathered that the customary frequenters of the green were for the most part men whose journey through life had brought them to where the roadside shadows were beginning to lengthen. They might, collectively, form another Spectator's Club—one, at least, might have sat to Steele as Sir Andrew Freeport, and I think I could introduce you to an excellent counterfeit of Will. Honeycomb. Very naturally, their talk was mostly of local concerns, and, savouring of comment rather than of description, was of little interest to a stranger,—Hadleigh's own "Chronique Scandaleuse," and the game of bowls; the present place, and the matter in hand—certainly two justifiable themes. The discourse became broken in proportion as the game proceeded. I think they were expert players. I noticed how uniformly the "jack" was bowled to within a certain



distance from the "footer"; and how accurately each player gauged the bias of his bowl. That bias, or rather its effect, is most curious to watch. The bowl travels, perhaps, three-fourths of the distance towards the jack; you think it will miss its mark by at least a foot, when lo! it rounds suddenly and gracefully, and fetches the jack a smart tap on the side while you are guessing the inches by which it has missed. Bowls, I was assured, is a "funny game." Some players meet little success save when bowling from their favourite end or corner of the green; that very end or corner is fatal to others, whilst others again can only play with a bowl having a particular bias—a bias which they have tested so often that any other bowl is foreign to their hand. Bowls was long an illegal game, so rigorously repressed that bowling greens were searched out by order of magistrate in the days of Henry VIII.; but the men of Hadleigh have long enjoyed it with impunity, their parson, I doubt not, often joining them on the "dry, smooth-shaven green."

The bowling green is near the ancient parish church, whose soaring spire reminded me of that at Hemel Hempstead. The clock bell hangs above the dial, on the east side of the spire; it is an Ave Maria—that is to say, it bears the inscription, in reversed Lombardic characters, "Ave Maria graciæ plena Dominus tecum." They tell interesting stories of bells in Hadleigh, stories concerning the eight bells that hang in that old tower, and of men who were wont to ring them. Four of the eight were cast by Graye of Colchester, and, like the great tenor at Lavenham, bear the words "Miles Graye made me" lest their tuneful sound should be attributed to the skill of another and inferior maker. Till recently, if

not to-day, several of the peal were in turn used for the passing bell, the bell being selected according to the fee paid for its use. Thus the fourth and oldest was likewise the cheapest ; it was tolled on the death of paupers, and was known as the Union bell. I heard how, until some few years ago, the tenor was rung as the curfew on winter nights, and at five o'clock in the morning, so that maids were indeed without excuse when they failed to bestir themselves betimes.

Very curious is the story of the Ringer's Jug ; but its main features are met with in other towns. At Hadleigh, the Ringer's Jug, a huge holder of drink, was kept at the Eight Bells Inn, in Angel Street, but is no longer there. At Christmas, and on other occasions when pence were plentiful, some sixteen quarts of strong ale were poured into its belly, and intruding strangers, "unconscious of their doom," were compelled, not always reluctantly, to contribute towards its replenishment as the ale diminished. This, indeed, was from start to finish the recognised, correct procedure, for was it not enjoined in the words inscribed on the jug itself ?

If you love me due not lend me,  
Euse me ofton and keep me clenly,  
Fill me full or not at all  
If it be stroung and not with small.

Such jovial celebrations are doomed to extinction in no distant future ; in most English towns and villages they are extinct already. The ranks of ale-loving bell-ringers have of late been sadly thinned by the ravages of teetotalism—an epidemic which makes swift progress, despite many hindrances. I could name a town where live a sign-painter and a bell-ringer, both noted exponents of

the art of drinking deeply ; but as their associates drop out of their respective professions their places are taken by men whose drink, like Samson's, is only from the limpid stream, and if those two survive another decade they will be objects of scorn or pity to their temperate brother craftsmen. In some towns I have been shown huge jugs which men of an earlier generation could empty at a draught ; but who is sufficient for these things now ?

I heard a far different story of past days from the lips of a farm labourer. As a boy, some sixty years since, he seldom saw meat upon his father's table. The family lived on the outskirts of Hadleigh ; all—father, mother, and the older among many children—worked in the fields almost throughout the year ; even the smaller youngsters gathered acorns, or searched for firewood, or for blackberries to hawk through the town. He assured me, with obvious sincerity, that day after day the family would dine off a mess of offal, bought at the mill door at 1s. per stone. This, thrown into the stew-pot with a cabbage, or some potato peelings from “ the house,” was the customary fare of many families in the neighbourhood, and was precisely what other folk threw to their pigs and poultry. The father, it appeared, was lucky if he could get sufficient “ small beer ” ; the strong ale in the Ringer's Jug was not for the likes of him. But the farmer and the miller were in a different case ; and my friend the labourer drew a rosy picture of their prosperity when he was a boy. Even now the farmer very probably gets more than nine coombs of wheat—let us say 170 stones—off one acre of ground ; he can thrash 100 coombs in a day, and the miller pays him as much as 14s. a coomb for the grain. The



millers, in turn, gets about 1s. 10d. per stone for the flour at the mill door—and a very nice profit too! In fine, my informer thought there was “no call” to trouble about agriculture, for that was doing well enough: look what fine houses farmers usually live in, and watch what they eat and drink! But the labourers must be looked to more closely and regarded as human beings, or presently they will all sail to America and the English farmer will have to sow his own corn, and cut it too. Talking of corn, I learned that the Corn Exchange was built nearly a century back, on an open space then called Church Croft—where, in the distant once-upon-a-time, the bull was baited for the amusement of the rabble and *élite* of Hadleigh.

Morning came, and something more than a sprinkle of rain deterred me from rambling far abroad. I passed much time, however, in the precincts of the church and rectory, and in the inn parlour—writing up my journal, thinking of the worthies of Hadleigh, and determining “whom to choose and whom to shun” for the purposes of these pages. I will not describe the church, for I saw it but in part, and remember imperfectly the little I saw. But I may repeat a few anecdotes touching its story.

The Church of the Virgin Mary stands, or is thought to stand, near the site of an older structure, concerning which nothing is known. Its furniture was largely modernised during the restoration effected thirty years back; straight-backed pews of ancient pattern were supplanted by oaken benches on which you could hardly sleep unobserved. The present octagonal pulpit is also of oak; the brass lectern is a comparatively recent gift.

I am, I fear, such a one as Earle blames in his "Microcosmographie"—"one that hath that unnatural disease to be enamoured of old age and wrinkles"—and was therefore more interested in one of two Decorated arches, in the south wall of the south aisle, beneath which the dust of Guthrum, King of East Anglia, is supposed to lie. Of this there is no existing proof, nor was any stone of the church laid until Guthrum the Dane had been long dead. But Asser tells us that Guthrum was buried in the "royal town" of Hadleigh, and tradition usually locates such tombs in the oldest church of the neighbourhood. The older folk have also a story concerning a sunken passage that led from this tomb to the house of a painter in Duke Street; but careful search in recent years has failed to discover it.

There were strange doings in this old church in bygone days. Some are remembered merely as legends passed from man to man; some are recorded in embryo in the volume of ancient registers, carefully cherished in an iron chest; others are briefly set down in the Guide. The Reformation set its mark upon Hadleigh very effectively; Foxe asserts that it was one of the first towns that received the Word of God in all England; which he chiefly attributes to the preaching of Bilney, who was much in East Anglia, and eventually perished at Norwich. Indeed, according to Foxe, the men of Hadleigh must have been a pattern of piety to their countrymen. He tells us that many here were "exceedingly well learned in the Holy Scripture"; they had read the Bible repeatedly from end to end and almost knew the Pauline Epistles by heart, so lovingly had they conned those choice writings. Children and servants

alike were taught in the volume of the Word ; moreover, the people were followers as well as readers of God's law, and Hadleigh, as Foxe thought, was more like a University town than a centre of clothmaking. All this the Martyrologist sets down in the first paragraph of his account of "Doctor Rowland Taylor," sometime Rector of Hadleigh, and the subject of my next chapter. To the memory of Taylor there is an inscription on brass, on the north wall of the chancel, and a window of stained glass in the south aisle.

Time passed ; Puritanism was professed by the more advanced Reformers, and its principles in turn spread rapidly in Hadleigh. The church vestments, of unusual richness and variety, and the plate had been bartered for money at the Reformation ; the period of the Rebellion was equally destructive of the church's property. Dow-sing did not overlook this town in the course of his visitations ; he found here seventy superstitious pictures (*i.e.*, for the most part, stained glass windows), so he destroyed thirty and ordered that the remainder should be destroyed also. He seems to have met with no organised opposition, and was thus more fortunate than those local zealots who, about the same year, determined to demolish the newly erected communion rails. The rector at that time was Robert Cottesford, a Suffolk man, who had previously been rector at Monk's Eleigh, and was a nephew of Laud, by whom he was collated to the living at Hadleigh. Certain persons, who regarded communion rails as an invention of Satan, sought to remove them by force ; but Cottesford was resolved that they should do nothing of the sort. So one Christmas Day, having been warned of the coming attempt, the



rector armed himself with a stiletto and, standing near the rails, declared his readiness to thrust it into the first man who should approach. Cowed by the threat, the Puritans withdrew; but next day they effected an entrance, removed the rails, and did much other damage.

I have mentioned two rectors of Hadleigh; the names of nearly fifty are known to history: the first, Rob. de Oysterne, was here so long ago as the year 1292—when Edward I. was King over the land, when John Peckham, better known as Friar John, was Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard of Gravesend was Bishop of London. Of the early names on that long roll we know little, but as we approach the Reformation period our knowledge becomes fuller, and thenceforward we find the names of interesting men. A few may here be noted with a running pen.

Thomas Rotherham, collated by Archbishop Bouchier in 1467, was born at Rotherham in 1423. His family name was Scot. He gained distinction and earned several preferments before he became Rector of Hadleigh, and was afterwards Lord High Chancellor of England, Bishop of Rochester and of Lincoln, and finally Archbishop of York and a Cardinal of the Church of Rome. Those were the days of plural livings, and Rotherham was, I suppose, like other rectors of Hadleigh, also Joint Dean of Bocking—once the home of the famous Bishop Gauden. Walton, in his *Life of Sanderson*, says that Rotherham was of “great wisdom and bounty and sanctity of life”; but I can find no record of his doings here. He died of the plague in 1500, and was buried under the shadow of those grand old clustered columns that support and adorn the Lady Chapel at



THE COTTAGE IN THE CORNFIELD.





York Minster. To him succeeded William Pykenham, who in his day held more benefices than I care to enumerate. He was essentially a Suffolk prelate. He became Archdeacon of Suffolk in 1471 and Rector of Hadleigh the following year; at Ipswich you may still see "Pykenham's Gate," in Northgate Street, once attached to the Archdeacon's residence. Of more importance is the red-brick gatehouse, a few yards to the south-west from Hadleigh Church—a monument of his interest for that church's welfare. The gatehouse—usually called the Deanery Tower, is flanked by hexagonal turrets, and is attached to the far more modern rectory. Pykenham, as the story runs, had himself planned a rectory to be entered through the gatehouse, but did not live to build it. A winding stairway leads to the summit of the right-hand exterior turret; on the first floor is the library, where is a painting on plaster by one Coleman, a local artist; and two others by Canaletti, once the guest of a subsequent rector. Pykenham is also remembered by his bequests to the poor, by the almshouses which he founded in George Street, rebuilt some years ago, and by the legend which assigns to him the "tomb of Guthrum"—not that already alluded to, but one in the chancel. This, it would appear, must be legend indeed; for there seems no reason to doubt that Pykenham was buried at Stoke-by-Clare, having, like Matthew Parker afterwards, been Dean of the College in that town.

Three-quarters of a century passed; several learned men, not without repute in their day and generation, were successively rectors of Hadleigh; and then we encounter the name of John Still. Still, sent here by

Parker, was born at Grantham in 1543. His is one of the most interesting names associated with the town, not for any record of his work here, but because he was author of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.<sup>\*</sup> This literary curiosity was long thought our earliest English comedy; but the discovery, in 1818, of *Ralph Royster Doyster* (alluded to in my second chapter) disturbed "a long-established precedence in our dramatic annals." Still's comedy—begging the question of its authorship—was first printed in 1575, during his rectorship here; it had previously been acted at Cambridge, where he had been student, fellow, and professor. Written in rhyme and in five acts, the comedy has an original, somewhat coarse, but not uninteresting plot; it introduces its readers to old Gammer, who, whilst darning for Hodge, loses her needle—"a little thing with a hole in the end"—a catastrophe which sets the whole village agog and causes many complications and much indelicate language. Still became Archdeacon of Sudbury in 1577, and filled other offices ere he became Bishop of Bath and Wells. But he evidently spent much time in Hadleigh. The list of curates is known to be very imperfect; but there was apparently no regular curate-in-charge whilst Still was rector, which argues that he discharged his duties here with comparative regularity. Moreover, he had several children by his first wife, to whose memory there is a brass in the church, and these were baptized here, which would hardly have been the case had he been seldom in residence. Still died at Wells, and was buried in the cathedral; the epitaph on his alabaster monument was written by Camden.

\* The authorship is disputed, but most critics attribute it to Still.

John Beaumont, sent here by Elizabeth when Still went to Wales, and Thomas Goad, a native of Cambridge, were rectors of note, and both lie in the precincts of their church. The latter was an English delegate at the Synod of Dort. His likeness was long preserved on the face of a sun-dial that hung on a porch no longer standing; the rector was shown in his surplice, approaching a funeral. His monument, known to have been formerly in the church, has disappeared; it is related that a brother, summoned to his death-bed, died suddenly and was buried in the same grave. He was succeeded by Cottesford, already mentioned, who was deprived soon after the scene at the communion rails, and is reputed to have turned physician and died at Ipswich. Three near successors, chaplains to Juxon, Sheldon, and Sancroft respectively, were all buried in the chancel here. The last of the three, Charles Trumball, was deprived as a non-juror in 1691. To Trumball, in 1695, succeeded Zachariah Fiske, who had indeed acted as rector even while Trumball lived. He was also Rector of Cockfield—once the home of Churchill Babington, author of “The Birds of Suffolk,” who was visited there by Stevenson in 1870. Richard Smallbroke, collated to Hadleigh in 1709, became Bishop of Lichfield; his successor, Robert Clavering, was long Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, and, dying as Bishop of Peterborough, was buried in the choir of his cathedral. And so the list extends; name after name is of men who became widely famous ere they entered into rest, almost every rector filling other honourable offices. Richard Ibbeston was a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, and Precentor of Exeter; William Byrche, memorialised in Worcester



Cathedral, was Chancellor and Prebendary of that sanctuary ; David Wilkins was Librarian in the Archbishopal Library at Lambeth, Canon of Canterbury, and Archdeacon of Suffolk. There were yet three rectors before, in 1830, Hugh James Rose was sent here by Archbishop Howley. His influence in the Oxford Movement is well known ; it is even said that the famous Tracts were the direct outcome of deliberations held in the rectory here, where Rose was visited by Hurrell Froude, Palmer, and others. A testimony to Rose's worth, from the pen of a greater man than Froude or Palmer, is so felicitously expressed that I venture to quote it from the "Apologia Pro Vita Sua": "To mention Mr. Hugh Rose's name is to kindle in the minds of those who know him a host of pleasant and affectionate remembrances. He was the man above all others fitted by his cast of mind and literary powers to make a stand, if a stand could be made, against the calamity of the times. He was gifted with a high and large mind, and a true sensibility of what was great and beautiful ; he wrote with warmth and energy ; and he had a cool head and cautious judgment. He spent his strength and shortened his life, *pro ecclesia Dei*, as he understood that sovereign idea." Rose became Principal of King's College, London, in 1836 ; he died and was buried at Florence only two years later.

I have written enough to show why I spoke of the "worthies" of Hadleigh. The list might be indefinitely prolonged ; but it must suffice to add that the learned Trench was curate here during Rose's rectorship ; that John Overall, who was Bishop of Norwich three centuries ago and a translator of the Authorised

Version, was born and baptized in the town, as were also William Alabaster, author of "Roxana," and William Fuller, father-in-law to Brian Walton, whom he assisted with his "Polyglott," which was praised and patronised by Cromwell. Nor need I overlook good old Isaac Toms, a Dissenting parson, who preached the Word in Hadleigh for fifty-seven years, and rests from his labours in the graveyard of that church from which he dissented. He lived to be ninety years of age, and, dying in 1801, had been the friend of Watts and of Doddridge. Let us hope that Toms was indeed sound in faith, and unlike a "Mr. Beamon of Hadleigh," who, at a meeting of the Presbyterian Classis held at Wenham in 1583, was reported to have preached an "ungodlie sermon defacing the men of Antwerpe." Beaumont, it may be noted, was the name of an old and honoured family in Hadleigh; a memorial formerly in the church nave was to a Joseph Beaumont who died in 1681. As we have seen, at least one rector bore the name; and a second Joseph Beaumont, born in Hadleigh in 1616, was the author of many volumes, a parson at Kelshall and Barley in Hertfordshire, and a Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Let me saunter up and down awhile before I turn in to rest, for the contemplation of so much learning and preferment is extremely humbling to a mere layman.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A SUFFOLK WORTHY

NEXT morning, a drizzle of rain fell again upon Hadleigh, and I feared a bad wetting if I started prematurely upon my rambles. I confided my doubts to the comely Suffolk lass who laid breakfast at the inn ; but she predicted a blue sky before noon, so I presently went on my way rejoicing. She proved a true prophetess. There was a rift in the rain-clouds ere I left the town, and a blink of blue that augured well for the future. Indeed, as I turned into the lane that led me, after many deviations, to the little church on the hillside at Aldham, the clouds had parted, and instead of leaden hue and depressing rain I saw, to the far horizon, an expanse of unbroken azure. A large gull, wavering in the bright sunshine over a cornfield near the church, was a welcome wanderer so far from sea. A tinker, mending a kettle by the roadside, must surely have passed his days in an inland town ; for he stared at the gull in unfeigned surprise, as who should say, " Never before have I seen so fearful a wild-fowl."

At Aldham a farmyard adjoins " God's Acre " ; the songs of larks and the cackle of poultry made a strange medley of sound. The headstones in old churchyards usually display some curious inscriptions ; one such at Aldham reads :



When some few moons and fewer suns  
Had run their usual round,  
Death with his scythe hastely runs  
And swiftly mows me down.

These epitaphs, for the most part, are but endless variations on the theme that life is uncertain—as uncertain as the play of the arrow that tops the round tower of Aldham Church. The simile, in various forms, has occurred to many. When the spectator meditated among the tombs in Westminster Abbey, he thought of that passage in Holy Writ which likens human life to the path of an arrow—so soon “closed up and lost.”

But I came to Aldham not to meditate amidst decay. I came, rather, with my head full of a dramatic and very tragic story. I may say, indeed, like Defoe, that I came “principally to satisfy my curiosity and see the place where that famous martyr and pattern of charity and religious zeal in Queen Mary’s time, Dr. Rowland Taylor, was put to death.” The story may be said to begin here, under the very shadow of Aldham Church. Readers may find it in detail in the pages of Foxe, and a useful digest from Foxe is in Southey’s “Book of the Church.” By bringing together the fragments from this corner of history I may provide an interesting narrative. The story is worth repeating; but I must tell it in my own way.

Early in the reign of Mary, the parson of Aldham, one John Averth, favoured a return to the ritual of Rome. Of Averth himself we know little, nor is that little much to his credit, unless he is greatly belied by Foxe. At that time, as we know, many persons wished a return to pre-Reformation practices, and Averth found no difficulty

in obtaining assistance. He became one of three who determined to re-introduce the Mass, or, as Foxe puts it, to "bring in the Pope and his maumetry againe into Hadley Church." His two helpers were one Foster, a lawyer, and John Clerke, a man of Hadleigh. Foxe, indeed, says that Foster and Clerke were the instigators of the movement, and that they "hired" Averth to celebrate Mass at Hadleigh Church after the Romish fashion. But, so far as I can ascertain, neither Foster nor Clerke held any position in the church, and it is probable that Averth, being a parson so near at hand, and "a very fit minister for their purpose," was in reality the prime mover in this matter. However this may have been, these three men determined to re-introduce the Mass at Hadleigh. In this they were to be stoutly opposed, for the Rector of Hadleigh, Dr. Rowland Taylor, who in 1544 had been collated to the living by Cranmer, was a staunch Reformer.

The Mass presupposes an altar. But at Hadleigh, as elsewhere since the Reformation, there was evidently no altar in Taylor's day, but an unfixed communion table such as Ridley had sanctioned in his episcopal visitations, and such as more Catholic churchmen had termed "oyster boards." Foster and Clerke's first step was to "build up" an altar; but many parishioners were otherwise minded, and the structure was destroyed in the night. It was again rebuilt and protected from further violation. Mass was to be celebrated on the following day, when Averth, protected by armed followers, was to come over from Aldham with the necessary vestments and other paraphernalia required for the "Popish pageant."

On the morrow, as Taylor sat reading the Bible, probably in what is now the rector's library, he suddenly heard the church bells strike up. The Rev. Hugh Pigot, M.A., in his interesting book on Hadleigh, says that Taylor heard the bells "to his great surprise, as they rang for an unusual service." I do not know on what authority this is stated, for Foxe records, clearly enough, that Taylor supposed something was to be done "according to his pastoral office," and that he therefore arose from his Bible and went into the church. The doors were mostly shut and barred; but the chancel door was "only latched," so the rector entered and passed into the chancel. What he there saw might have annoyed a high Anglican; it must have astounded Taylor. For there stood Averth, in Eucharistic vestments suited to the Roman office, about to begin the celebration of Mass. His crown, as Foxe assures us, was newly shaven; he was surrounded by men with drawn swords and with bucklers; Foster and Clerke were both present.

Taylor's first remark, as the story runs, would now be deemed unfit for the lips of an ecclesiastic. "Thou devil," said he, "who made thee so bold to enter into this church of Christ, to profane and defile it with this abominable idolatry!" Foster turned upon him furiously; charged him with being a traitor, and asked why he hindered proceedings that had the Queen's sanction. Taylor replied—very naturally—that he was no traitor, but the duly appointed shepherd of the flock at Hadleigh, and he ordered the "Popish wolf" to betake himself elsewhere. Again Foster called him a traitor, and repeated that Taylor was resisting the Queen's proceedings. But Taylor was not easily put



down. He charged the Papists with idolatry, maintaining that their conduct was contrary to the Scriptures, against the Queen's honour, and dangerous to the realm. He then pointed out that the proceedings were illegal, as the law provided that Mass could only be said at a consecrated altar. But here Taylor was at a disadvantage. He was evidently not aware that Averth had brought with him a super-altar—a consecrated stone, used by priests at private Masses—and Averth, at first somewhat disconcerted by Taylor's charge of illegality, was encouraged to proceed by Clerke, who pointed out that the super-altar was sufficient for their purpose. At the same time, Foster and his men led Taylor out of the church and the Mass was presently concluded.

It is difficult, in whatever direction one's prejudices may lie, to accuse Taylor of improper conduct. But his share in that day's proceedings was to cost him his life—so far had the ecclesiastical mind of England travelled since the Forty-two Articles of Edward VI. had been approved by convocation in London. Immediately afterwards, Foster and Clerke drew up a letter of complaint against Taylor. The letter was addressed to Gardiner, who himself had lain successively in the Fleet and the Tower for conscience' sake and was then Lord Chancellor of England. Gardiner, when in prison, had written against Cranmer in defence of the Real Presence, and Foster knew well that such a letter would not be ignored by the Chancellor. The charge was promptly considered, and Taylor was ordered to appear before Gardiner. Such procedure could have but one ending; Taylor's personal friends feared for his safety, as well they might, and he was urged to flee. It was

argued that he could not hope to be heard with impartiality; that he could not expect justice, much less favour, at the hands of Gardiner, who would assuredly send him to prison and ultimately to death. But Taylor was too staunch a Protestant to care for his own safety. He replied that by God's grace he would appear boldly before his adversaries; he had lived into "terrible and most wicked days," and could render God no greater service than by facing Gardiner, whose religion he summarised as "idolatry, superstition, errors, hypocrisy and lies."

The journey was undertaken without delay. Taylor left the care of his parish to Sir Richard Yeoman—"a godlie olde priest," who was destined to be himself deprived in turn, and who for some time wandered in Kent, where he hawked laces and pins and points and "such little things" for a livelihood. Again Taylor was urged to flee. He set out on his journey accompanied by a servant, John Hull, who offered to go with him anywhere rather than to Gardiner. But nothing could shake Taylor's resolution. "Oh, John," said he, "shall I give place to this thy counsel and worldly persuasion, and leave my flock in this danger?" John's answer is not recorded, but he remained with his master to the last. So they reached London; and Taylor presented himself before Gardiner.

The details of the charge and of the reply are too long to quote. Moreover, they would interest none save theologians—so far to seek in these degenerate days. But I may summarise the gist of the matter, ere I pass to the story of Taylor's martyrdom. Foxe tells us that Gardiner reviled and reproached Taylor, "according

to his common custom," and that Taylor listened with truly Christian patience. As is often the case under similar circumstances, both men asked more questions than they answered; Gardiner, indeed, seems to have anticipated Milton's dictum that a man may be a heretic in the Truth; for his own part, he thanked God that he had returned to the Catholic Church of Rome, and expressed the desire, doubtless sincere enough, that Taylor should do the same. To do this, in Taylor's opinion, would be to forsake the true Church of Christ, and he asked rather that the Pope and his followers should return to Christ and his Word and renounce idolatry. He urged that Gardiner himself had written truly against the Pope, referring, presumably, to the "*De Vera Obedientia*," written by Gardiner and other bishops some twenty years earlier—"The ablest," says Dr. Gairdner, "of all the vindications of royal supremacy." The Chancellor replied that his former foreswearing of the Pope was like Herod's oath, which occasioned the death of John the Baptist, and deserved to be broken rather than kept. Much abuse followed. Both men rated each other soundly, using such language as Luther had used against the Pope and as Milton was to use against Salmasius. Many readers, glancing through Foxe's narrative for the first time, will be surprised to notice how highly the memory of Henry VIII. was esteemed, in those days, by men of undoubted integrity. Foxe himself refers to Henry as a "most godly king"; Taylor styles him "blessed" and of "famous memory." They will notice, too, that Gardiner was very zealous for the Queen's authority. This is more easily explained. Gardiner was for some time Mary's most trusted



councillor; he was probably as anxious as the Queen for the extirpation of Protestantism, and as Chancellor of England he naturally represented her prerogatives as those for which he was most anxiously concerned. This first interview concluded with warm words about the true nature of what Gardiner styled the "holy Mass" and Taylor the "blessed Sacrament"—the latter maintaining, with "all the doctors," that it is only a memorial of a sacrifice offered once for all. The result was assuredly a foregone conclusion. Taylor was removed to the King's Bench, where he lay, altogether, for nearly two years. Here he read, wrote, preached and prayed; and here, for a time, John Bradford was a fellow prisoner.

I have before me a reprint of "The Letters of the Martyrs," first published in 1564, with a preface from the pen of Coverdale. It contains a letter written by Taylor during his imprisonment, in which he narrates, with much spirit, what passed at his subsequent examination by the "King and Queen's most honourable Council." Again the disputants found no end, in wandering mazes lost; again the Fathers were appealed to, and Taylor claimed intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, and of Augustine, Cyprian, Eusebius, Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, and other books. The Councils were also appealed to; Gardiner called Taylor a "snatcher and a patcher," and on hearing the Hadleigh parson's final refusal to recant, he promised judgment within a week.

Judgment was not delayed. On the last day of January, Taylor, with Bradford and Sanders, appeared again before Gardiner. Many other bishops were present. The three divines were roundly charged with heresy and

schism, and were commanded to adjure their errors. They stoutly refused, and were sentenced to death. Taylor was removed to the Clink, the Bishop of Winchester's prison in Southwark, close to his own house and the landing-place known as the Bishop's Stairs. Gardiner ordered that the heretic should be strictly guarded, but he was permitted to speak to the crowd by the way, and promised to confirm the Truth with his blood. In the Clink, however, he only remained till evening, when he was taken to the Counter in the Poultry, a prison of one of the London sheriffs. The Counter, or, as Stow spells it, the Compter, stood close to St. Mildred's Church, and was so old that Stow, writing soon after Taylor's day, could find no record of its origin. Here, for a time at least, Taylor shared a chamber with Bradford, so soon to perish in the flames at Smithfield.

At this point Gardiner disappears from the story, and Bonner, then Bishop of London, comes upon the scene. According to Foxe, Gardiner had been very boldly faced by Bradford, who had stated the Protestant case very ably, and the bishop, after passing condemnation on Taylor, Bradford, and others, seems to have been persuaded that such persecution would ultimately avail but little. He was glad to leave such cases wholly in Bonner's hands, who, as Foxe puts it, "supplied that part right doughtily," which few will deny. Accordingly, on February 4, the day upon which John Rogers was burnt at Smithfield, Bonner came to the Counter to degrade Taylor. Such episodes of Church history are hardly edifying, but, unfortunately, there is little doubt that what follows is substantially true. Bonner, on seeing Taylor, offered to sue for his pardon if the

prisoner would recant and turn to "holy mother church." "I would," replied Taylor, "you and your fellows would turn to Christ. As for me, I will not turn to Antichrist." Bonner ordered him to put on the vestures of the Mass. Taylor refused; so the vestures were put upon him by another. Then the good man broke out into bitter raillery. Walking up and down the room, he said: "How say you, my Lord, am I not a goodly fool? How say you, my masters? If I were in Cheape, should I not have boys enough to laugh at these apish toys and toying trumpery?" Bonner's answer is not recorded; but we read that he at once proceeded to degrade the prisoner. As customary in such cases, he scraped Taylor's fingers, thumbs, and the crown of his head; but did not strike his breast with the crozier, as his chaplain warned him that Taylor would strike in return, which the prisoner hastened to acknowledge. "By St. Peter," said he, "the cause is Christ's, and I were no good Christian if I would not fight in my Master's quarrel." Bonner laid his curse upon him, and Taylor, returning to his chamber, boasted to Bradford that he had frightened the Bishop of London.

So that night, now so long ago, and in that prison of immemorial antiquity, now an unpleasant memory only, Taylor spent his last hours in social intercourse and in the preparation of his Last Will and Testament. His wife and his son Thomas supped with him, as did also John Hull; but before supper they knelt and prayed, repeating the Litany. Later in the evening he addressed his son in words which—to me at least—seem very touching. I give them here in Foxe's quaint spelling. "My deare sonne," said he, "Almighty God



blesse thee, and give thee His holy spirit, to be a true servant of Christ, to learne His word, and constantly to stand by His trueth all thy life long. And, my sonne, see that thou feare God alwaies. Flee from all sin, and wicked living; be vertuous; serve God with dayly praier, and apply thy book. In any wise see thou be obedient to thy mother, love her, and serve her; be ruled by her now in thy youth, and follow her good counsell in all things. Beware of lewd company, of young men that feare not God but followe their lewd lusts and vaine appetites. An other day when God shall blesse thee, love and cherish the poore people, and count that thy chiefe riches is to be rich in almes; and when thy mother is waxed old, forsake her not, but provide for her to thy power, and see that she lacke nothing. For so will God bless thee, and give thee long life upon earth and prosperitie; which I pray God to graunt him."

He spoke also to his wife, warning her against Popery and superstition; he advised her to marry again—some honest man who feared God, and to rear her family in the love of God and in learning. To Thomas he gave a volume in Latin—sayings of the martyrs from "*Ecclesiastica Historia*"—in the end of which he wrote his Testament and some words of farewell. In that Testament he commended his family to the care of God; assured his dear friends at Hadleigh that he departed with a quiet conscience, having preached to others what he had himself learned from "God's booke, the blessed Bible," and urged them to be steadfast in the faith.

On the morrow, at two o'clock in the morning, the

Sheriff of London and his officers came to the Counter, and Taylor was taken to the Woolsack, an inn near Aldgate. His wife, with her daughter Mary, and an orphan whom Taylor had supported from infancy, watched for him in the porch of St. Botolph's Church, for she knew that the sheriff and his men would pass that way. It was so dark that the good woman could hardly see her husband ; but she called to him, and the sheriff allowed the two to talk together. Presently the little company kneeled down and repeated the Lord's Prayer, the sheriff and some of his attendants being so touched that they shed tears. When they parted, Taylor's wife promised that by God's grace she would meet her husband at Hadleigh, and she followed him to the Woolsack. Here Taylor was watched by Yeomen of the Guard. His wife was advised by the sheriff to go home. He promised to care for her necessities, and ordered two officers to go with her. She wished, however, to go to her mother's house, where they promptly conducted her.

Taylor remained for some hours at the Woolsack. Then, towards noon, he was placed on horseback in the inn yard, and was handed over to the Sheriff of Essex. The faithful John Hull, and Taylor's son Thomas, waited outside to see him. Hull set the boy on the horse before his father, who blessed his son, spoke to those around in favour of "lawful matrimony," and then said, "Farewell, John Hull, the faithfulest servant that ever man had." When the cavalcade set out upon their journey, Taylor was the most cheerful man among them. He chatted freely with the sheriff and with the Yeomen of the Guard, nor did he forget to counsel them earnestly to repent of their sins. By his escort, as a whole, the

prisoner was kindly treated, but one of the yeomen was unkind and churlish towards him, and Foxe was careful to record that the name of that man was Homes.

That night, as Taylor sat at supper with the Sheriff of Essex, the talk was largely of religious matters. The sheriff seems to have been truly anxious for the prisoner's conversion—or, as Taylor himself would have said, his perversion. He argued that the loss of such a man as Taylor was to be deplored; God had made him very learned and wise, and had given him great repute in the eyes of the Council. Moreover, he was beloved for his virtues as much as for his learning, and without doubt, if he would join the holy Church of Rome, he would presently be in even greater repute than ever. The sheriff added that, if Taylor would comply, he and the company present would themselves sue for his pardon. Finally, the sheriff and yeomen offered to pledge their word by drinking with the prisoner. It is not recorded that Taylor answered "Get thee hence, Satan," but the conversation must surely have reminded him of the Temptation on that exceeding high mountain of which St. Matthew speaks.

The scene that followed is closely described by Foxe. It was worth describing. When the company had all drunk, as an act of goodwill, they passed the cup to Taylor. Taylor paused as if considering what he should reply. After awhile, "Master Sheriff," said he, "and my masters all, I heartily thank you for your goodwill. I have hearkened to your words and marked well your counsels. And to be plain with you, I do perceive that I have been deceived myself, and am like to deceive a great many of Hadleigh of their expectation." At this,



not seeing the true drift of Taylor's remarks, the sheriff and his men were pleased. "It is the comfortablest word," said the sheriff, "that we heard you speak yet." But presently he asked what Taylor meant when he spoke of deceiving many at Hadleigh. Taylor's reply savours somewhat of the wit of his contemporary, Latimer, and must be quoted in full. "I will tell you," said Taylor, "how I have been deceived, and, as I think, I shall deceive a great many. I am, as you see, a man that hath a very great carcass, which I thought should have been buried in Hadleigh churchyard, if I had died in my bed, as I well hoped I should have done. But herein I was deceived; and there are a great number of worms in Hadleigh churchyard, which should have had jolly feeding upon this carrion, which they had looked for many a day. But now we be deceived, both I and they; for this carcass must be burnt to ashes, and so shall they lose their bait and feeding that they looked to have had of it." By this reply the company was greatly surprised and disappointed; it furnished Foxe with matter for a passing homily. He adds that Taylor's chief thought, even in his most prosperous days, was that worms would presently devour his body, and expresses the wish that "bishops and spiritual men" had always meditated in like manner, for then they would not have turned from God's truth to uphold the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

At Chelmsford, Taylor was transferred to the care of the Sheriff of Suffolk, who led him, by a somewhat circuitous route, to Hadleigh by way of Lavenham. Here, by the market cross, Taylor spent the last two days of his life in confinement, chained, it is said, to a post in the

basement of the Guildhall, till recently preserved. At Lavenham the sheriff was joined by many "gentlemen and justices upon great horses," evidently brought together to ensure that so refractory a heretic was satisfactorily disposed of. In justice, however, to them, and to Taylor's many persecutors, we must remember that they would have been glad to save his life; they did not desire his blood so much as his recantation. Hardly any historian of repute now charges the Marian persecutors with cruelty for its own sake. To misjudge them on this point is to misjudge the whole story. Taylor was offered not only pardon but preferment; even a bishopric was tendered him in vain, and we may appreciate the grounds of his refusal without ignoring the facts of the case. True Protestant as he was, only one course was open to him; he chose the stake rather than the mitre because, as Foxe assures us, he had not built his house upon the sand, but upon a sure and immovable rock—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Taylor maintained his cheerfulness to the last. As the party journeyed towards Hadleigh, he told the sheriff that he was in sight of home, almost at his father's house, and asked if they were to pass through the town. The sheriff promised that they should do so. The promise pleased Taylor, who desired to see his flock once more, whom he claimed to have truly taught. So they came towards the town where, for so many years, he had fought the good fight of faith. If I read the narrative correctly, they passed down Gallows Hill and entered Hadleigh by way of "Hadlie brigge." Upon the bridge waited a poor man "with five small children," whom Taylor had been kind to in the past, and who now

prayed that the good man might himself be succoured in his hour of need. The common folk, hearing what was going forward, had flocked together from all parts. They beset the procession on both sides and clamoured so loudly against the treatment of Taylor, whom they sincerely loved, that the sheriff and his men rebuked them strongly. Taylor repeated his promise that he would seal God's word and truth with his own blood, and the people, continuing their lamentations, cried out that he had been their good shepherd, and compared themselves to scattered sheep.

Foxe records that Taylor was deprived of his living when first sent to prison, and that while there he had been supported by free gifts from folk that visited him. Some of this money was still left, so when he reached the old almshouses Taylor gave it to the poor inhabitants, who stood at their doors to watch him pass. In the last house lived a blind man and woman, who remained within. Taylor, who had put the last of his money in a glove, threw it in at the window and rode on. It may be called the last free act of his life.

Thus, on February 9, 1555—the day of Hooper's martyrdom at Gloucester—they came to Aldham Common. The place is common-land no longer, and when I first saw the stone that commemorates the martyrdom it stood "in among the bearded barley," at a spot from which Taylor could look down upon the church where he had so often preached, and the neighbouring church at Kersey. A great crowd had gathered together, but he was not permitted to speak; we are told, indeed, that whenever he tried to do so a staff was thrust into his mouth. As was usually the case during the Marian



martyrdoms, the crowd largely favoured the victim, and serious rioting might have followed had Taylor been allowed to appeal to the sympathies of those around him. Foxe mentions a rumour, current at the time, that the Council had threatened to cut the martyrs' tongues out of their mouths if they attempted to speak publicly before they died.

The scene which followed, though less revolting than that enacted at Gloucester, was marked by much cruelty. Taylor, finding he could not address the crowd, prepared to die. A man named Soyce helped him to take off his boots; then he stripped to his shirt, giving his clothing to those standing by. Again he tried to speak, but had only time to affirm that he had taught the Truth from the Scriptures before Homes—the yeoman previously mentioned—struck him on the head with a cudgel. Then Taylor began to pray, and a poor woman, heedless of threats that the horses should tread her down, pushed forward and prayed beside him. Close by stood the stake; before it was placed a tar-barrel, in which the sufferer was to stand. He was very near that home of which he had spoken.

Taylor was chained to the stake in the usual manner. One Doningham, a butcher, was ordered to arrange the faggots, but pleaded lameness. The four men who ultimately performed the task are named by Foxe, who speaks of them harshly. Mulleine of Carsey (Kersey) was "fit to be a hangman"; Soyce was a "very drunkard"; Warwike had lost an ear for "seditious talke"; King was a "deviser of enterludes." They did their work "most diligently," and when all was ready Warwike flung a faggot at the victim. The faggot struck Taylor

on the head, and blood ran down his face. Then, as he repeated a Psalm in English, Sir John Shelton struck him on the mouth and ordered him to speak Latin. The fire was lighted. Taylor, after calling upon God, neither spoke nor moved. Presently Soyce killed him with a blow from a halberd, and the body fell forward in the flames. Taylor was one of thirty-six persons martyred in Suffolk during the Marian persecution.

Taylor left behind him an honourable name. We do not know how long elapsed ere any public honour was done to his memory. On the morrow, as we read in Strype's "Cranmer," John Nowell, who had succeeded to the benefice, preached at Hadleigh. It was a "right Popish sermon," says Strype, which we can easily believe. Nowell admitted that the crowd had been much moved by the martyr's death, but did his best to correct the impression, and imputed Taylor's fortitude to assistance from the Devil. Moreover, ignoring the fact that Taylor was not allowed to speak (which he must certainly have known), he blamed him for not having addressed the crowd, and attributed such silence to stubbornness rather than Christianity. Probably, as Mr. Pigot surmises, some forty or fifty years passed ere a stone, with a brief, rude inscription, was placed on the spot where Taylor suffered. The inscription—if memory serves me—is almost obliterated ; but it runs as follows :

1555

D TAYLER IN DE  
FENDING THAT  
WAS GOOD AT  
THIS PLAS LEFT  
HIS BLODE.

In 1729, when Aldham Common was enclosed, it was agreed that the land round Taylor's monument should not be ploughed "within a rod." Some years afterwards—probably in 1739, as a Minute seems to show—the stone was protected by iron railings. A more imposing monument was erected in 1819, immediately behind the older stone. On this monument are some couplets from the pen of Nathan Drake, author of many books still familiar to us, who lies in Hadleigh churchyard. Those couplets have been published from an inaccurate copy; I re-copied them as I stood by the martyr's grave, and need hardly apologise if I repeat the whole inscription:

Suffered  
the 9th of February  
1555.

This is the Victory that overcometh the World,  
even our Faith.—1 John, ch. 5, v. 4.

Mark this rude stone where Taylor dauntless stood,  
Where Zeal infuriate drank the Martyr's blood;  
Hadleigh! That day how many a tearful eye  
Saw thy lov'd Pastor dragg'd a Victim by;  
Still scattering gifts and blessings as He past,  
To the Blind Pair his farewell alms were cast;  
His clinging flock e'en here around him pray'd  
"As thou hast aided us, Be God thine Aid."  
Nor taunts, nor bribe of mitred rank nor stake,  
Nor blows, nor flames, his heart of firmness shake  
Serene—his folded hands his upward eyes  
Like holy Stephen's, seek the opening skies:  
There, fix'd in rapture, his prophetic sight  
Views Truth dawn clear on England's bigot night;  
Triumphant Saint! He bow'd and kiss'd the rod,  
And soar'd on Seraph wing to meet his God.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### AT BRANTHAM

I BEGAN the last stage of my journey when I quitted Hadleigh. The branch line of the Great Eastern Railway, that meets the Ipswich line at Bentley Junction, is the only railway service to Hadleigh. Unless the morning of my departure coincided with some unusual business or festivity that line is remarkably well patronised. Long before the train moved our compartment was full ; as we were on the point of starting a red-faced country girl entered breathlessly, dragging two small boys in her wake. A glance round showed that we were a motley, heterogeneous group, strongly differing as regards mental and corporeal tastes. In one corner a man in a Norfolk suit read the *Sporting Times* with avidity and smoked a briar—occupations so distasteful to the old lady at his elbow that she relieved her feelings, more than once, with copious draughts of brandy from a flask, which so assuaged her resentment that she presently asked the offender if we had passed Raydon. The two boys ate apples ; the country girl had provided candy for the journey ; two older damsels, whose talk revealed them as housemaids on their way to Ipswich, partook of biscuits, and passed the bag freely among the company. Never before, “in all my wanderings in this world of care,” had I met such open defiance of the

conventionalities. On our own confession, only two had met before ; yet we conversed indiscriminately, with less constraint than is often obvious between old acquaintances. Moreover, like the party in Macaulay's poem, "we all of us talked at a time," and I fear we said little to edification. I left the train at Bentley without a pang.

An open, flat country, bright with a hundred species of wild flowers, stretches from Bentley to Brantham, a village near Catawade Bridge. Here park-like features take the eye ; here the land is more suggestive of the Essex marshes, a few miles to the south-east ; the railway from Manningtree to Ipswich divides the whole. I saw yellow toadflax climbing everywhere above the ripening blackberries ; tiny watercourses, intersecting here and there, were set about with forget-me-not and yellow flea-bane ; old sleepers from the line, lichen-grown and worn, did duty for foot-bridges. In places, the autumnal hawkbit looked from the drier banks into the sparkling water ; in places, a graceful beech afforded a welcome shelter, very restful to the eye at this season when the flora is almost uniformly yellow. Among those watercourses lurked moorhens ; I startled one from a large clump of forget-me-nots, standing like a blue-topped islet in the stream.

I wished to reach Brantham Church early in the afternoon, so, coming out upon the Manningtree road, I entered the village sooner than I expected, nor paused till I reached the bridge that crosses the railway, whence there is a fine view over the quays at Manningtree and Mistley. To me, the prospect was of peculiar interest ; for there I had loitered on the first day of my ramble.

Now, as then, the waters of the Stour were low ; the gables of Manningtree were ruddy in the sunshine, and golden the newly piled corn-ricks in the Suffolk foreground. Beneath, on the railway embankment, a man in a striped shirt and yellow corduroys leaned against a timber shanty, enjoying a quiet pipe—so obviously in a brown study that I doubt if he perceived me on the bridge. Far to the left, the sails of a windmill were clearly relieved against the sky ; farther still, a brown-sailed barge, apparently off Wrabness, was the only large craft within sight.

Fortune favoured me ; I found the Rector of Brantham in his church ; and he indicated some features of interest. First, there is a well-preserved Constable. This, painted in 1804, was originally an altar-piece, but is now on the south wall, near the font. Like the altar-piece at Nayland, it is seldom mentioned by any critic except in terms of disparagement ; Mr. C. J. Holmes has called it “ a feeble imitation of West’s religious works ” ; Lord Windsor considers it “ of no account ” ; Mr. Brock-Arnold writes that it “ is devoid of merit beyond a creditable arrangement of the masses.” I cannot think the picture so bad as the critics would have us believe : I do not deny that it does little credit to Constable ; but I am convinced, with the Rector of Brantham, that it is unduly depreciated. It depicts Christ blessing little children, and is at least sympathetic in conception and soft in tone. All the figures are standing, save a small child on the left arm of the Saviour, who holds it with an obviously endearing grasp. An older child stands before Him. The remaining figures perhaps represent grandsire, sire, mother, and two



grown daughters, and seem skilfully disposed. A mother is naturally no unbiased commentator on her son's work, in literature or in art; but we need not ignore Mrs. Golding Constable's opinion that the infant depicted on the Brantham altar-piece was more delightful to her eyes and thoughts than a picture which she had seen by West. Concerning this early work of Constable's, I heard an anecdote from the lips of the rector; I believe that anecdote has never been published, but he has kindly permitted me to repeat it here. A lady, until recently living in the neighbourhood of Brantham, was niece to her whom Constable painted on the extreme right of his canvas. The rector—thinking the fact of interest to students of Constable's pictures, and thinking, too, that they might wish to hear the details of the story—asked this lady to prepare a written statement. This she repeatedly refused to do; but at length promised that if the rector would write it from her dictation she would sign it. A few days later she died, leaving the promise unfulfilled. The omission is to be deplored; for such a statement might have thrown much light upon Constable's methods, and might have preserved some of his conversation, as he probably knew the lady intimately.

This little church, on a beautifully wooded hillside, is dedicated to St. Michael. The churchyard is entered through handsome lych-gates—a feature more rare in Suffolk than in Hertfordshire or in several other counties. Built of green oak a few years ago, they are likely to outlast many adjacent structures; the sexton pointed out the floriated decorations as being finely executed, and I did not withhold admiration. The rector drew

my attention to the list of his predecessors ; the first, Hugo Waleys, was here before the year 1300 ; and the following century opens with the names of John de Kent, Peter de Brampton, and Robert de Clifton. I cannot trouble readers with the names of the subsequent thirty-four, to whom was committed the cure of souls at Brantham ; but may mention that one of them was Dr. Rhudde, whom I wrote of at East Bergholt. He was rector here from 1782 to 1819.

Poring upon that list, I could but reflect, as I have done elsewhere, on the scarcity of personal narratives prior to comparatively recent times. Books, we often think, are only too plentiful ; but many of them can only be termed books by courtesy. Autobiographies, of reasonable merit as works of art or as records, are scarce enough ; and that scarcity is deplorable in the eyes of many. How much, for instance, should we appreciate the story of John of Kent, or Peter of Brampton, from their own pen, if comparable in human interest to the narratives of Brainerd, or Bunyan, or Newton. For consider ; these men, and their immediate successors, take us back in thought to the reigns of Edward II. and III. and Richard II., when the Church of England was in an interesting if unsatisfactory condition, and these rectors of Brantham could have set down many strange stories of those dark days—stories of greed and benevolence, of cruelty and kindness, of open wickedness and of unobtrusive piety. They might have recorded much of interest concerning the services of the church in which they ministered ; and some mute, inglorious Milton of Catawade or Brantham might at least have left his name to posterity in the annals of his parson. What

did the rectors of this ancient parish think of the scandals passed from man to man concerning the Knights Templars; of the triumph of Bruce over their own weaker King; of Wycliffe; of the "two cardinals"; of the statutes against Papal jurisdiction and patronage; of Wat Tyler; of the Lollards? We do not know, for, as a whole, they were little troubled by the *cacoëthes scribendi*, and most of them are known to us by name only. Again, as at Bures, we regret the lacking annals of a parish.

Defoe, in a book from which I have already quoted, alludes to a day of excitement and strife in which the men of Brantham must have shared. In the "Diary of the Siege and Blockade of Colchester," which he included in his "Tour through the Eastern Counties of England," we read that on June 17, 1648, Sir Charles Lucas rode out of Colchester with twelve hundred horse, sending parties towards Harwich and elsewhere in search of provisions. The foray was not so successful as it might have been; for the Parliamentarians had soldiers in south-east Suffolk, and these, passing into Essex over Catawade Bridge, successfully resisted the Royalists in the neighbourhood of Manningtree. It is but a few minutes' walk from Brantham Church to the present Catawade Bridge; and we can fancy how local folk watched those soldiers as they crossed the river, or loitered, expectant of stirring news, on the north bank of the Stour, as Suffolk men and women did on the several occasions when they heard the cannon thunder in naval encounters off Harwich.

The village of Brantham is little more than a sprinkle of cottages parted by the railway, a forge, a post-office, and an inn—which we will call The Cow. This last



stands at the parting of the ways from Manningtree, from Stutton, and from Bentley, and as I fastened back the parlour door to admit the sweet Suffolk air, I reflected that even so quiet a spot was, so to say, a centre of life. The persons that enter Brantham by those thoroughfares are as three tributaries of information, contributing, day by day, to the knowledge of its inhabitants. They exemplify the truth that many can help one, for whilst, between them, they bring so much news into the village, they can take but little from it, Brantham having little to give. Hence, if you journey here from Manningtree or Ipswich, you may pour your budget of news into very eager ears ; but returning to town, you can tell nothing that shall interest one man in fifty.

I discovered, as I sat in the inn parlour, that I was closely watched by an old woman from a cottage opposite. She was prepared, I saw, to take full advantage of that open door ; had she owned opera-glasses she would have known no deeper bliss. I was a stranger in the village ; perhaps a wanderer from a far country ; perhaps a convict in disguise ; perhaps a detective from London or Ipswich. She made ludicrous efforts to follow my proceedings closely ; now she came to her doorway ; now she peered across the road from above the geraniums in her window ; she even climbed her staircase in order, as I supposed, the better to see into the parlour of The Cow. Each of these movements was essayed several times, until, as it was growing dusk, I sauntered into the open road to smoke. This was too much. Curious as she was touching my appearance and pastimes, she had no desire to be addressed by the unknown. As I crossed the opposite threshold she promptly shut her door, and

I saw her no more until the following morning. Then, sure enough, she was early at the post of observation, whence she watched my breakfasting and the preparations for my departure with surprising persistence. Indeed, I began to feel as one under a disconcerting surveillance, and was so conscious of her attentions that I failed to enjoy, as I might otherwise have done, the strains of an harmonium and the voice of a young woman in a cottage near by, where "Shall we gather at the River?" had been chosen for the Sunday morning hymn. I have since wondered whether all who pass that cottage are subjected to a like scrutiny, and whether that old dame is yet decided as to my own trade or profession. For aught I know, she may love the Scriptures dearly; but I will hazard a guess that the Book of Proverbs is not her favourite portion.

A lane, rough-rutted and winding, leads from the bridge at Brantham to the north foreshore of the Stour estuary. It is one of those lanes that have provoked controversy as to their origin. White, in the "Natural History of Selborne," refers to two lanes in the neighbourhood of that village, somewhat similar in character, although on a larger scale. "These roads," he says, "running through the malm lands, are, by the traffic of ages, worn down through the first stratum of our freestone and partly through the second; so that they look more like water-courses than roads. . . . In many places they are reduced sixteen or eighteen feet beneath the level of the fields; and after floods, and in frosts, exhibit very grotesque and wild appearances, from the tangled roots that are twisted among the strata and from the torrents rushing down their broken sides." Allowing

for geological differences between Hampshire and Suffolk, the origin of such steep lanes is still perplexing, despite the off-hand assurance of physiographical theorists. In the present case I have a suspicion that the wit of man did something to assist the work of Nature—a suspicion suggested by Mr. S. Baring Gould's volume on "Cornwall." In a chapter on smuggling, the author suggests, plausibly enough, that the deeply trenched paths leading inland from Cornish coves were artificially cut in order to facilitate the secret conveyance of contraband goods. The lane to Brantham may have been at least deepened for the same purpose; for many a smuggled keg or bale was landed between Catawade and Shotley Gate, as between Harwich and Manningtree on the opposite bank of the Stour. Once in the lane the smuggling band, who loved darkness, could with difficulty be espied or heard by the preventive men, and if they encountered them in the lane itself the scuffle might be of uncertain issue. By daybreak these "run" goods would be distributed over a large area, and the kegs that came up the Stour with the tide would lie in twenty villages and towns the following night. All this is largely conjecture; but I fancy that Suffolk patriarchs, who remember yarns heard at their fathers' knees, would tell you my conjecture lies very near the truth.

I noticed, in that deep and sinuous lane, immense bushes of common wormwood, so plentiful elsewhere in Suffolk. The natives call it mugwort, a name, I believe, usually restricted to the *artimisia vulgaris*, an allied but distinct plant. Out on the water-freckled estuary, at low tide, the botanist often spends a happy hour, returning richly laden with spoils for the herbarium. But I



am not a botanist, and can only add that the sea-holly is conspicuous there ; I saw one large clump with drifted seaweed tangled about its roots. There, too, grows the wild mulberry, and sea-samphire is so plentiful that it is largely gathered for pickling. Over all this lonely stretch of estuary the gulls wailed plaintively as I watched them from behind a bank of turf, one by one dropping to snatch some morsel that caught its keen eye. Stream-lets, creeping landwards with the turning tide, sang like raindrops on a pool as they wandered among a thousand muddy channels, lapping at length the tufts and tussocks of the firmer fringe. Two boys, having waded into deeper waters, were deftly catching dabs with their fingers, and throwing the little captives some distance before them, where the slapping and jumping fishes were watched, with demonstrative attentions, by a yelping terrier. The boys told me that they often caught numbers of these fish by driving them into narrow channels and damming the water behind. Need I add that they deemed it excellent sport ?

A little farther eastwards I reached a spot by the riverside that has its tragic story. Here, faced by sunken and rotting piles, stands a deserted and partly dismantled mill—a gaunt and sorry monument of a bygone age, and all that is left of a hopeful investment. It was abandoned to the care of time many years ago ; but its larger timbers still stand, and much of its machinery remains. The large fly-wheel hangs now as when it whirled industriously, still exquisitely balanced and adjusted ; but rust has bitten deeply into its once smooth face, and spiders stretch their webs from spoke to spoke. The windows are mostly smashed ; the roof, in places, has

quite collapsed. Close by stands another deserted structure, which I supposed was the miller's home. The story runs that some fifty years ago the mill was worked by a man whose name was Death; here, on a day still fresh in the minds of many, he carefully hanged himself, whether in the mill or mill-house my informant had forgotten. The deserted mill, the sky behind showing through the boardless spaces on its walls; the lonely foreshore; the voice of the wind among the trees; the wailing of the gulls, and the thought of that suicide imparted an eeriness to the spot, and I sympathised, at the time, with a girl who assured me it was haunted. Our sense of the supernatural is easily touched to the quick under the influence of time and place, and I know no reason why we should be less sensitive in the open country than in the tapestried chamber, provided the local legends be equally gruesome.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BESIDE THE ORWELL

“WHATEVER else you miss, don’t miss the Tattingstone Wonder. You’ve seen strange things in your time, the same as I have, but you haven’t seen anything so strange as that.” Thus, as nearly as I remember, ran the advice of a tall, lank man in Brantham village, who expressed much interest in my rambles. From him I suffered severe cross-examination as to my mode of life ; and he kindly expressed the opinion that to “ loaf about in the country for weeks on end ” was to pass one’s time very agreeably. He inquired minutely touching my future route, and strongly urged me to visit certain villages that he named. But after each burst he returned to one sovereign recommendation. He allowed that I might visit such a village or hamlet, or avoid it, as I pleased, but I must not turn aside from the Tattingstone Wonder. Questioned as to the nature of this “ wonder,” he replied by sagacious nods and winks and by slight hints that it was a kind of ruin, its origin being wrapped in mystery.

I found, on inquiry, that I might visit Tattingstone without seriously lengthening my journey to Pin Mill, so I decided to follow the advice so persistently tendered. A pleasant road, bordered here and there with such wormwood as I had seen in the deep lane, led me past Stutton Hall, a fair homestead dating from the reign of



Elizabeth, but modernised to suit the taste or requirements of successive inmates. The Hall is near Stutton village, where the people showed me much kindness, divulging their private concerns with a frankness embarrassing to the listener. At Stutton I stayed so long gossiping with the villagers that morning was well advanced before I struck into the footpath through the corn which was to lead me to the Tattingstone Wonder. I crossed fields where oats, heavy and plump in grain, had been cut a day or two before; and threaded my way through a lane where clumps of bracken grew so strong as to half choke the brambles with which they were inextricably mixed. Acorns were almost ripe on the pollarded oaks that shaded the lane; thousands of harebells adorned the banks; and the sound of the five bells of Tattingstone came crisply on the breeze.

Presently, looking over the hedge, I saw, as I supposed, the tower of some village church. It was a flint-faced tower of average height, with graduated battlements. On closer inspection, however, I saw what appeared a small church converted into three cottages, the pointed windows on its northern side being utilised, unaltered, by the inmates. The roof of the three cottages was continuous, and sloped upwards until it rested against the south wall of a pseudo-nave; but the south wall of the tower had been pulled down, or had never been built. Thus, on the one side, you may see, as you walk round this architectural curiosity, three cottages in no way different from a thousand others, with a profusion of flowers in their few feet of garden and in their church-like windows. But passing to the south you see the wall of a church, composed largely of flint, and carried so

high that from this side nothing can be seen of any cottages. Travelling past rapidly, you would suppose it a partially ruined church, but if the local legend speaks truly it was never a church, nor was ever intended for such. It is told how, many years ago, "Old Squire White" declared that his neighbours often wondered at nothing, and determined to provide them with something to wonder at after his death. So he built this strange anomaly; on the south a church, on the north, three cottages and a tower. Naturally enough, the inhabitants of Tattingstone and its neighbourhood have wondered ever since; some, like the man at Brantham, have desired others to wonder also. Doubting the truth of this story, I wrote to the Rev. Charles L. B. Elliott, the present Rector of Tattingstone, who very kindly replied that he believed the building to be of no archaeological or historic interest. Moreover, he referred me to White's "Suffolk" (4th edition, page 608), where we read that Tattingstone Place "was purchased about the middle of the last (eighteenth) century by Thomas White, Esq., who rebuilt it and erected near it an ornamental building in the form of a church, commonly called 'Tattingstone Wonder.'" Nobody on the spot knew more than this; the smaller folk had "heard tell" much about it; a strapping youth, with rosy lady-love upon his arm, could not "justly say" why the Wonder was built thus; whilst an old country-woman, crossing the adjacent field with a large Bible under her arm, answered never a word to my inquiry. But the five bells continued to call from Tattingstone tower, so I turned my back upon the inexplicable and followed a very serpentine road until I reached the village. Here, however, although



VIEW ON THE ORWELL, NEAR IPSWICH.





old cottages and picturesque gardens are abundant, I found nothing to set me scribbling, and was afterwards pleased to notice that others had been equally unsuccessful. Mr. Dutt, in his "Little Guide" to which most Suffolk ramblers now owe so much, remarks merely that Tattingstone is "a rather large village, with a church chiefly in the Decorated style, but with some Perpendicular portions and modern windows. The font is E.E." I wished to consult the list of rectors, if such existed; but the congregation was already chanting the Psalms; the south door stood open, and I did not choose to divert the attention of the devout.

I had promised to lunch at Stutton Street, so returned thither post-haste, and, having taken leave of my acquaintances of a day, set my face towards Holbrook. My way led me past spots where, looking between trees, I saw enticing prospects of the wider Stour between Mistley and Parkstone Quay. Giant burdocks stood sentinel by the wayside. The scenery was yet more lovely as I approached Holbrook. The road, winding and undulating, was shaded by interlacing arms of oaks. Narrow lanes, little trodden by the foot of man, left the high road at right-angles; I should like to explore them all when time permits. Yet a little farther, and on my left, the houses of Holbrook were scattered over the crest of a wooded slope. At the spot where I paused to enjoy the prospect an army of red champions peeped at me from their ambuscade among the nettles; a wood-pigeon was calling somewhere below, in a little bosage of beech-trees; gorgeous red-admirals sailed up and down in the bright sunshine of early afternoon. Yet a little farther again, and I looked down upon sheep resting

in green pastures, upon a delicious expanse of greenery and sylvan loveliness, and then upon Holbrook Mill and the stream that joins the Stour at Holbrook Bay. On the wider stream that expands before the bridge a swan was "oaring her way in stately majesty," and water-lilies shook their heads as she passed. Ivy has mounted to the top of that old brick bridge. Near it the stream is parted by a strip of lawn, set about with pink roses, clearly reflected in the water. It is like a spot described in a sonnet by Wordsworth :

An old place, full of many a lovely brood,  
Tall trees, green arbours, and ground flowers in flocks ;  
And wild rose tip-toe upon hawthorn stocks.  
Such place to me is sometimes like a dream  
Or map of the whole world ; thoughts, link by link,  
Enter through ears and eyesight, with such gleam  
Of all things, that at last in fear I shrink,  
And leap at once from the delicious stream.

On the hilltop, looking down upon the mill and upon the Stour, stands Holbrook Church, its massive tower covered with ivy almost to the summit of the battlemented angle-turret. In that church is an altar-tomb to John Clenche, a judge who died in 1607, and was therefore, I suppose, the "good judge Clenche" of Queen Elizabeth, who married a noted heiress and settled at Hollesley, near Orford Haven on the Suffolk coast. Above the tomb are the reclining effigies of Clenche and his wife ; at the head and feet kneel the figures of their eight daughters and seven sons.

Some huge pines, which Ruskin would have praised and Turner would have loved to paint, crown a hilltop near Holbrook Church. One, as nearly as I could



estimate, was seven feet in girth at my own height from the ground ; others were about the same size. Constable seldom introduced pines in his landscapes ; preferring, as his larger pictures prove, trees of fuller and softer foliage, which he probably deemed more truly characteristic of English landscape scenery. For although we have many pines in southern England, particularly in Surrey and Hampshire, and although their beauty as features in a landscape is appreciated to the full by no less an artist than B. W. Leader, we hardly regard the pine as a typical English tree. The willow and the elm, so plentiful in the neighbourhood of his early home, appealed to Constable more strongly—a fact which we readily perceive whether we look upon his many finished pictures or his even more numerous sketches. I question, moreover, whether he had studied the pine as he had studied some other trees. Writing from memory, I doubt whether he ever executed a study of the pine at all comparable, in botanical fidelity or artistic thoroughness, to his well-known *Study of the Stem of an Elm-tree*, a fine oil sketch which I recently admired at South Kensington.

I could have slept beneath the shadow of those pines—the air was so soft, the scent of those trees so fragrant, the relaxation of limb and muscle so soothing after sterner exercise on open road and stony footpath under an August sun. But I was nearing the end of my journey. I was to bid farewell to Suffolk folk and scenes on the morrow, and I hoped to pass the evening pleasantly at Pin Mill beside the Orwell. So I bestirred myself once again, and continued my way among the late honeysuckle which festooned the hedges thereabouts, and

presently met with an incident novel in my experience. Having quietly approached a stile, I leaned over it for some time, looking for the famous Freston tower, which I could not see. Then, vaulting the stile, I alighted in the very midst of a covey of partridges. The covey was unusually large, for I counted twenty birds, and sportsmen to whom I afterwards related the incident shared my surprise that I could approach so closely ere the birds rose. As a boy I often stalked partridges in Hertfordshire, getting the field side of the hedge when I saw them in a lane, and sometimes approaching near enough to observe their movements; but never before had I actually stood in the centre of a covey. I fancy my Holbrook adventure is equally foreign to the experience of others.

Chapel folk were singing lustily as I strolled through the village of Chelmondiston—a village long beloved of smugglers, scattered over the sloping west bank of the Orwell. The Orwell, as I was reminded, has been called “the English Rhine”; I do not know whether the Germans smile at the comparison. Turning to the left at “Orwell Cottages” I reached a gully-like depression, which, after declining gradually for a few hundred yards, opens out to the quayside at Pin Mill, where the Ipswich and Harwich steamers slacken speed to lift passengers from the dingey or to hand them into it. On the bed of that gully stood cottages, almost hidden among fruit-trees; their long gardens sloping upwards to the road that flanks the gully on its southern side. On the fore-shore is an inn named The Butt and Oyster, where you may find excellent opportunities of studying two interesting classes of men—the yachtsman and the

bargee. For Pin Mill is, in its way, an important little riverside port ; usually pervaded by an atmosphere of ideal quiet and seclusion, but at times displaying bustle and stir sufficient to please the most exacting adventurer.

It was said by them of old time that men, as a last resource, would often "buy a birch and set up school-master," thereby hoping to end their days in a genteel occupation, teaching the young idea how to shoot. Such a tendency is no longer among us ; it was already dying when Lamb penned his delightfully desultory essay, "The Old and the New Schoolmaster." My own experience has brought me rather into contact with men who, in early life, followed a variety of trades ; but as years increased they retired to a country inn, deeming themselves happy "to have 'scaped the Stygian flood" of a noisier and more contentious world, and hoping, "by their own recovered strength," to enjoy life heartily for awhile yet. One such I met at Pin Mill—one who will not murmur if I relate a few memories of himself and of his home ; for my promise to do as much was received with the utmost good humour. My remarks will at least be dictated by gratitude, for I passed in his company a few of the pleasantest hours of my life.

Mine host of The Butt and Oyster had been a public singer of repute in Ipswich and a dealer in the antique in that fine old town. His home resembled a museum of art rather than a waterside inn. His walls were hung with paintings and prints, some rare and choice, and he believed himself the possessor of originals by Constable and Gainsborough—a point to which I must return. Even the common bar was adorned with steel engravings from Wilkie ; here hung *The Rent Day*,



here *The Cut Finger*, here *The Blind Fiddler*, and here *The Village Politicians*. As I passed from room to room I noted other pictures of interest, of which I name but a few. I noticed a *Scene near Ipswich*, happily executed by Robert Burroughs, and a riverside piece by Wells. Here, in an upper room, hung a fine old engraving of Rubens's *Waggoner*, and another of Wilson's *Ceyx and Alcyone*, the original of which the artist was said to have painted "for a pot of porter and the remains of a Stilton cheese."\* I saw, too, a quaint old print, published in 1772, entitled *The Victorious Return of the City Militia after storming the Dung-hill and compelling the Garrison to surrender*, and Sam. Ward's more famous *Bringing Home the Recruits*.

At the last, my host took from a corner a small landscape in oils, and, placing it in a good light near the window, propounded a question. "Now," said he, "is this a Constable or is it a Dunthorne?" It was, to me at least, a perplexing problem—"something craggy to break the mind upon," as Byron once said; and I remember little of what passed between us on the subject. I confessed ignorance as to what Dunthorne had painted; upon which the virtuoso argued that this riverside scene was eminently characteristic of Dunthorne's work; but he thought there were points about the sky suggestive of Constable's brush—hence the dilemma. A dilemma it remained; for he soon replaced the picture, and, proposing a ramble after tea, led me below. Together we passed the hour before sunset in the inn parlour, where our talk was discursive, and subject followed subject

\* There are—as Cunningham pointed out—many variations of this story.

with conspicuous inconsequence. Such talk may not be largely profitable, but it is at least wholly pleasant.

So we rambled awhile beside the Orwell, and "saw the summer sun go down the sky." I need hardly say how familiar the district was to Constable, whose powerful sketch *On the Orwell* is now at South Kensington. It is characteristic of his more stormy manner—that manner which led Ruskin to affirm that Constable's showery weather is "great-coat weather, and nothing more." The sketch shows a bend in the river, between Pin Mill and Ipswich, over which brood some angry clouds; a few white gulls are drifting with the wind. A fishing-smack lies in the foreground, canted eastwards at low water; behind it are two brigs; while on the left some men are standing before a shore-side doorway. On the right, a windmill is seen on the opposite bank of the river. The sketch was executed late in Constable's life—many years after the pencil sketches entitled *Shipping near Ipswich* and *Ship-building at Ipswich*; it was engraved by Lucas, and was one of fourteen plates published shortly after the artist's death.

We trod in the footsteps of Gainsborough also as we struck inland among the oaks, and stood knee-deep in bracken to watch the deer in Woolverstone Park. "Gainsborough's Lane" is on the east bank of the Orwell, commencing near Ipswich promenade and stretching towards Nacton, where, in 1773, Margaret Catchpole was born in a cottage which still stands and where she worked at the Priory Farm. But the beautifully wooded neighbourhood around Woolverstone and Wherstead and Freston was equally familiar to him; and it was of Gainsborough my companion spoke as we turned

homewards in the early twilight. He was not, however, a man of one topic. He pointed out, in the far distance across the Orwell, the old home of the Broke family known as Broke Hall. It is famous as the birthplace of Sir Philip Broke, who, as commander of the *Shannon*, encountered and captured an American vessel, the *Chesapeake*, in 1813. The result of the struggle—a prearranged affair—must have been a sad disappointment to the men of Boston; for although Broke himself was wounded, he subdued his more heavily armed opponent in a quarter of an hour, and the spectators, who had lined the quays to watch his defeat, saw their vessel taken. Adjacent to Broke Hall is Orwell Park, once the home of Admiral Vernon, of even more famous memory, who served with Rooke at Gibraltar, and captured Porto Bello for George II. after losing only seven men; but failed to seize Cartagena, as readers of “Roderick Random” will remember. He was for many years Member for Ipswich, and, dying suddenly at Orwell Park on October 30, 1757, was buried in Nacton Church. “All these are certes interesting facts,” as the poet says in a different connection; but I did not cross the Orwell, so will leave readers to consult the many books which treat them more fully. The story of Margaret Catchpole, for instance, has been read by thousands in a volume by the Rev. R. Cobbold, sometime Rector of Wortham, in the north of Suffolk.

That night, when all our stories were told, when the yachtsmen had gone on board and the bargees had sought their beds, I sat at the open window to enjoy the coolness of the hour. The tide was creeping almost to the wall below; there was light enough for me to discern



“tender curving lines of creamy spray” and to trace the outlines of a few craft coming up the Orwell with the tide. The last sounds I heard were the passing of a steamer bound for Ipswich and the voice of my host and art critic as he wished “to each and all a last good night.”

## CHAPTER XX

### THE ROMANCE OF HARWICH

THE Church of St. Mary at Erwarton, near Shotley Gate, was my one resting-stage as I journeyed from Pin Mill towards Harwich. The church stands on a beautifully wooded slope, looking down over Erwarton Bay. From that slope I saw the Stour sparkle while it was yet early morning, and beyond there opened out a prospect often admired—the view of Harwich and of Parkstone Quay from the north, where the Stour and the Orwell meet. Some monuments in Erwarton Church are older than the building itself, for they were in a former sanctuary. They are to the memory of members of the Daviller family, who, for aught I know, once wore those ancient helmets which I noticed near the pulpit. I saw, too, an inscription concerning Sir Philip Parker, a descendant by marriage of “Amata Bolleyn,” aunt to the unfortunate Queen of that name. Anne Boleyn is often mentioned at Erwarton ; for, many years ago, a casket shaped like a heart was discovered in the church wall, and is now in a vault beneath the organ. The discovery is usually associated with a tenaciously cherished legend. It is believed that Anne Boleyn wished her heart to be interred here—for reasons never divulged. I have met with a similar story at East Horndon in Essex, where the heart of that Queen is said to lie in an altar-tomb in All Saints’

Church. Few readers will care to decide between the rival claimants.

The lane that wound downwards to Erwarton Bay tempted me to loiter, and it was long ere I came out upon the foreshore. The place smelt strongly of the sea. Hardly a cloud moved across the sky; the pigeons that fluttered out from the wooded banks, to bathe in the standing pools, stretched their wings as though enjoying the coolness of the water and the morning breeze. Farther eastward, more nearly opposite to Parkstone, the high-water line was edged with flowering rush and bracken and set with low, twisted oaks, perhaps dwarfed by the salt water that soaks their roots. Hardly a sound reached my ears from the ships that lay off Parkstone Quay; but a dredger rattled and clanked not far from Shotley ferry, and there was an intermittent thunder of guns from Landguard Fort.

Sturdy arms gave long and strong pulls as they drew me from the ferry pier towards Harwich. As we moved away, a passenger pointed out the new barracks above Shotley Spit, building for the accommodation of sixteen hundred boys; then we ducked under the bows of the training-ship *Ganges*; then evaded the old coal-hulk; and as we approached Harwich the ferry-man waxed eloquent concerning several gunboats, and showed the South Godwin lightship in the offing. Almost before I realised it I was standing beside the steamboat ticket offices, surrounded by the chatter and confusion incidental to the departure of a steamer; and I felt, with no great pleasure, that once again I had parted for awhile with old churches and inns and village folk, and



was nearing the more prosaic experiences of life in larger and more busy centres.

“Harwich is a town so well known and so perfectly described by many writers, I need say little of it. It is strong by situation, and may be made more so by art. It is known for being the port where the packet-boats, between England and Holland, go out and come in.” So wrote Defoe, in language which may stand unaltered to-day; although the mail steamers, that pass in the night to Antwerp and the Hook of Holland, now start from Parkstone Quay, as they have done since 1883. Defoe, I am afraid, fell among thieves during his visit here; for he wrote that the inhabitants were “far from being famed for good usage to strangers,” being “extravagant in their reckonings in the public-houses”—a custom hardly peculiar, then or now, to the men of Harwich. It is amusing to find so old a writer lamenting the good old days when the town prospered and flourished. He mentions that much passenger traffic had been diverted from Harwich to the Thames; and that the stage-coaches which formerly plied between here and London “twice or three times a week” were entirely suspended, travellers being forced to hire a coach privately or to travel *via* Colchester and thence onwards in any other way most convenient to themselves. Could Defoe visit Harwich to-day he might hear equally dismal if dissimilar complaints; but he might perhaps reflect that had the town decayed with equal rapidity during the interim it would long ago have been as completely overwhelmed by its misfortunes as Dunwich by the sea.

Students of the romance of Harwich should not forget Pepys, who sat in Parliament as its Member from May

1685 to July 1687. He met with noisy opposition here at the election which deprived him of his seat, the electors being so discourteous as to allude to his personal misfortunes, and to shout, "No Tower men, no men out of the Tower." The garrulous diarist frequently alludes to the town in those innumerable daily jottings which have lightened so many hours. It is Pepys who tells us how Sir William Batten, after urging the uselessness of lighthouses, obtained permission from Charles II. to set one up at Harwich—much to his profit, as Pepys adds with customary freedom of comment. He alludes to the English fleet that lay off Harwich in April 1665, lamenting that we could fit out no other should that be worsted; later in the month he noted that his chief clerk, William Hewer, had paid off some of those vessels, which numbered above a hundred, "whom God bless!" On June 2 he hears that the fleet has sailed from Sole Bay, "having spied the Dutch fleet at sea"; then, six days later, he records the total rout of the enemy and the death of Van Tromp—which threw the diarist into such joy that he could think of nothing else. On Christmas Eve of that year he received "four great turkeys" from his friend "Mr. Deane at Harwich," a circumstance which he chronicles with equal gravity. He tells us, among other things, that on June 16, 1666, there fell on Harwich a shower of hailstones as big as walnuts; that on March 22, 1667, the Duke of York was here discussing and planning the better defence of the harbour; that in June of the same year Lord Barkeley was sent here to "look after the Militia"; and that in the following month the Dutch, who had threatened the town, had "gone clear from Harwich northward," but presently

drew near again in "great squadrons." One interesting entry must be repeated in his own words: "June 4, 1666. . . . I home; where no sooner come, but news is brought me of a couple of men come to speak with me from the fleet; so I down, and who should it be but Mr. Daniel, all muffled up, and his face as black as the chimney and covered with dirt, pitch, and tar, and powder, and muffled with dirty clouts, and his right eye stopped with oakum. He is come last night at five o'clock from the fleet, with a comrade of his that hath endangered another eye. They were set on shore at Harwich this morning, and at two o'clock, in a catch (ketch) with about twenty more wounded men from the *Royal Charles*." Pepys, I may add, eventually took these seamen before the King, and it was from their lips that Charles II. heard the first substantial account of the fight.

I do not know whether Constable painted the lighthouse erected by Sir William Batten, or one built subsequently. His well-known painting entitled *Harwich: Sea and Lighthouse* was executed in 1820; it was presented to the National Gallery of British Art in 1888. It is a study rather than a "picture" in the common acceptation of the term—a study of sea and sky with shipping in the middle and far distance, and a lighthouse, very primitive in appearance, on the strip of coast shown upon the right. The sky, on the whole, is illustrative of Mr. Brock-Arnold's remark that "in most of Constable's skies are masses of soft, warm, grey colour, the edges appearing to be touched with liquid silver; and through these, far beyond, one catches an occasional glimpse of the blue empyrean. He could not under-





HARWICH SEA AND LIGHTHOUSE.



stand the 'white sheet' theory when his beloved clouds offered such indescribable contrasts of glowing sunbeam and cool shadow." The picture is powerful and broad, rather than exquisite in points of minute detail; differing from other paintings which could be named as Mr. Joseph Pennell's drawings of Walberswick differ from similar studies from the pencil of Mr. Herbert Railton. Two pencil sketches of sea and coast at Harwich were drawn by Constable in the autumn of 1815; both are now at South Kensington, and are interesting as evidences of the subjects that appealed to him when loitering with sketch-book in hand. We may perhaps ask why, knowing so intimately the whole riverside, from Dedham to Harwich, and from Ipswich to Landguard Fort, he selected other scenes for his large pictures. The answer—if I may hazard a guess—is perhaps that his love for the quiet, pastoral scenery of his immediate homeland was so strong that he cared little for other spots a few miles off, however suitable to his art; but, once away from southern Suffolk, he found such coast scenery very fitted to his purposes—hence he painted Weymouth Bay, Yarmouth Pier, Brighton Beach, and Waterloo Bridge. In a word, it is remarkable that one who knew half Suffolk so well should have painted so large a number of pictures within five miles from his father's doorway, leaving two noble river estuaries, hardly more distant, almost unillustrated save for a few sketches.

At Harwich I heard more talk of Gainsborough than of Constable. It is needless to repeat the well-worn story of his somewhat romantic friendship with Philip Thicknesse, Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort. But we may remember, when sauntering on the beach,



how remarkable that friendship was, and how productive of incidents in the neighbourhood. Thicknesse—who had mistaken a painted figure for a living man, and was introduced to Gainsborough as the author of the deception—had seen the artist's portraits of Admiral Vernon and of Tom Peartree, which he liked on some grounds and disliked on others. The chance introduction led to a further examination of Gainsborough's work; his small landscapes were most unreservedly admired, and Thicknesse asked the artist to paint some yachts passing Landguard Fort. For the painting, which was subsequently engraved, Gainsborough received a few guineas; it was presently hung upon a damp wall, and perished while its author was yet living. Although Thicknesse was a most eccentric man, and although the narrative which he wrote shortly after Gainsborough's death was—as regards the man rather than the artist—little better than a libel, he undoubtedly did much to spread the artist's reputation. They quarrelled at length, and the origin of their dispute was differently represented by Thicknesse and by Gainsborough's relatives; but the story, which largely concerned a lady, a portrait, and a *viol-di-gamba*, has no immediate connection with Harwich. It has probably been narrated with as many variations as artists practise when portraying worthies on the signboards of wayside inns. The version repeated by Cumberland was communicated to him by one who heard it from Mrs. Gainsborough.

I heard much concerning Landguard Fort from the lips of one with whom Thicknesse might have fraternised agreeably. He was an officer, whose name concerns nobody and whose appearance I will not describe. But

to his conversation, infinitely diverting of its kind, I may at least allude. To do him justice, I must premise that he was the soul of generosity, being obviously unhappy unless most of the company were refreshing themselves at his expense. His spirits rose or fell as his audience increased or diminished; and his earnestness was measured by the violence with which he smote the table with his fist, after preliminary flourishes more expressive than words. In moments of unusual depression he would chastise an interrupter with a tongue which can hardly have its equal in Harwich; it was then he showed his metal and rose to the height of his great argument. He had, I divined, taken the British Empire under his wing; his one topic was concerned with its past, present, and future. The Empire had been won by the Ar-r-my; every man worth his salt served in the Ar-r-my; if any man living deserved two complimentary adjectives before his name you might take it for granted he had made his mark in the Ar-r-my. The Army was named in every twenty words he uttered. He would remind the waitress, with a kindly wink, that she must pardon his little ways and his familiarities, for he had been in the Army. If you refused a drink he advised enlistment, for in the Army you would learn how to drink like a gentleman. He had, it seemed, a canary in a cage upstairs, and I once heard him rehearsing to that songster the advantages of the Army as a calling in life. To be in his company for an hour was to hear the names of half the officers in several regiments, and to hear them blamed or commended in very trenchant language. I wondered, as I listened to his repeated sallies, whether the Navy had an equally sturdy champion

in the town, and whether he could carry all before him as ably as this apologist for the Ar-r-my. If such is the case, the United Services can have no heartier defenders than those in Harwich.

I owe that officer thanks. Before we parted he urged me to visit the Nelson Museum at the Three Cups Hotel, where, as he phrased it, the people would show me "the bedroom of Horatio Nelson, my boy, and his handwriting, and all that sort of thing, by G——!" So, after much rambling up and down in what Mr. Morrison would call "mean streets," I sought out the Three Cups Hotel, and was soon in "Nelson's Bedroom" that looks down upon King's Quay Street. Other rooms are also associated with memories of the great hero—one, now half hidden by clematis, is over the courtyard, and photographs of it may be bought in the town. I was shown a panel from the Nelson pew at Burnham Thorpe, a punchbowl used at the inn in his day, many old prints relating to the man or his deeds, and a manuscript letter bearing his signature, dated from the *Victory* at sea on July 1, 1804. Follow where we may in the footsteps of Nelson, we soon learn that the memory of few men is more warmly cherished. At many shrines we are requested to take an interest in the saint; it is taken for granted that we are interested in Nelson.

I have alluded to Landguard Fort. It was built in the days of Charles I., and stands, as "every schoolboy knows," on that narrow spit of land which flanks Harwich on its eastern side. Its history has been written by Major Leslie, and I am only concerned here with one interesting episode. In July 1667 the Dutch landed where Felixstowe now stands and essayed to scale the



walls of Landguard Fort. But they were successfully beaten off, and only regained their vessels by leaving their ladders behind them. Pepys heard the news at the Council-chamber, and recorded that the Dutch landed three thousand men, but were "beat off thence with our great guns." He noted, too, that there were no English horsemen on the Suffolk side of the fort, "otherwise we might have galled their foot." The last sentence in that day's entry in Pepys' diary is characteristic of the times. He mentions that the Duke of York journeyed to Harwich the day after the attack, while the Duke of Albemarle "sat sleeping this afternoon at the Council-table." Albemarle had recently been Master of the Horse; he had shown all his wonted fire and ability during the four days' fight near Dunkirk; but he was then in ill-health, and died two years afterwards.

Few men or women in Harwich now think of George Fox, who embarked here in 1684, on his way to visit the brethren in Holland. He landed at Briel, after a run of sixteen hours; and, spending several weeks in Holland, he sailed for England "on the sixteenth day of the fifth month," and returned safely to Harwich. He was weak in body and excited in mind. At Colchester, just before his voyage, he had been at a "glorious meeting," where "truly the Lord's power and presence was beyond words"; but even then he was deemed too weak for such exercises, and on landing at Harwich after the fatigues of travel he went to the house of his son-in-law, William Mead, "at Gooses, near Hare Street, to rest and recruit his enfeebled body."

The romance of Harwich, in the eyes of young folk,

must long have been bound up with its trade in ship-building, formerly more extensive, and in the capture and sale of lobsters and shrimps—always noticeable in the shops. As a fishing town, rather than aught else, I think of Harwich as I first saw it twenty years ago. I had journeyed from London in a crowded train, and as that train toiled slowly through the heart of Essex a wag thrust his head from the window at each station and shouted, “’Ere’s ’Arwich.” I knew nothing of the history of the town, and certainly cared little to investigate it. I had come to Harwich for a day’s fresh air, and in the spirit of an adventurer; and had hardly left the railway station when I hit upon a happy chance. An old man, dressed in a ragged blue jersey, with a face like the carved figure-head of an East Indiaman of the older pattern, was seated upon the quay-side, his legs dangling above the water. I was yet of comparatively tender years, but had notions of my own concerning a bargain. So we wrangled good-humouredly for many minutes before a compact was concluded. He was to sail with me round the Spit to the old landing-stage at Felixstowe; then back again, and about the mouths of the Orwell and the Stour—in short, I retained his services for the day, and those of his boat. I got the blind side of him betimes, the mere sight of a handful of choice, but exceedingly pungent, cigars bearing more eloquent testimony to my worth than any spoken tribute. But before we could put out to sea he had to buy something for his boat, and I remember walking with him through a back street, noticeable for its surprising odours of fish and tar, for the live fish that moved in shops, and the still livelier crabs that walked as they listed in the

public way. Of our day upon the water I remember but little, save that we put into Harwich for a midday meal. I dined at a hotel close to the pier, where a large party had engaged a room aloft and I was nearly squeezed to death on the staircase. I forgot my trouble when, in the golden afternoon, we ran the boat's nose ashore, somewhere near Walton Ferry, and lay fallow awhile. But our sail towards Harwich, in the early evening, showed me effects of sea and sky which I have never forgotten. Scott, in "The Lord of the Isles," penned a few lines literally applicable to that journey :

Each puny wave in diamonds rolled  
O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold  
    With azure strove and green.  
The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,  
Glowed with the tints of evening's hour,  
    The beach was silver sheen ;  
The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,  
And, oft renewed, seemed oft to die,  
    With breathless pause between.  
O who, with speech of war and woes,  
Would wish to break the soft repose  
    Of such enchanting scene !

I parted on excellent terms with that old, cheerful, weather-beaten sailor, who had stores of quaint anecdotes in his mind and even quainter language upon his lips. The more generous among my readers will be glad to know that I gave him the remaining cigars. According to Norden, he must surely have been in his right place ; for writing of Essex that topographer says, "The sea coaste is here and ther furnished with harbours for shipping, whereof the principall is Harwicke, which is a towne fitlie scytuate for seafaring men."



I did not go into St. Nicholas' Church. It was rebuilt in 1821, and contains little of interest; but the effigy of "Sir W. Clark, Kt.," is preserved, and his name must not be passed by. "Clerke," as Pepys writes the name, was sometime Secretary to Monk (afterwards Duke of Albemarle). It was partly from Clerke's letters that Pepys compiled the narrative which he entitled "Victory over the Dutch, June 3, 1665," as he himself acknowledged. Clerke was in the fight with De Ruyter in the following year; there he lost a leg, and dying from the effects of its loss was washed ashore at Harwich after several days.

I set out upon my rambles in the footsteps of Constable; but they have led me, as so many rambles do, to Dr. Johnson at the last. One evening, at the Turk's Head Coffee House, Boswell had passed a very pleasant time with his hero; having—*inter alia*—given him a description of the "romantic seat of his ancestors." Then Boswell referred to his coming journey to Holland, and Johnson exclaimed, "I must see thee out of England; I will accompany you to Harwich." And so, on Friday, August 5, 1763, Johnson and Boswell got into the stage-coach for Harwich, where they conversed agreeably with "a fat elderly gentlewoman and a young Dutchman." In due time they reached Colchester, where Johnson defended torture in Holland, talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction, discoursed upon behaviour after the Dutchman had gone to bed, and compared Boswell to a moth in the candle. Next day they reached Harwich, where Boswell secured his passage in the packet-boat for Helvoetsluys (where Catriona went), sent his luggage on board, and then dined with

Johnson at an inn, which I could wish he had named. Boswell was evidently distressed by the dulness of the town, and expressed the fear that Johnson might be detained here, but his companion made light of the topic. After awhile they went into the church, where the stalwart old churchman told Boswell to kneel and to recommend himself to the protection of his Creator and Redeemer. It was here in Harwich, after they came out of the church, that Johnson and Boswell discussed the philosophy of Berkeley—the former, “striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone,” exclaiming, “I refute it *thus*.” The rest must be told in Boswell’s words. “My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness and engaged to correspond by letters. I said, ‘I hope, sir, you will not forget me in my absence.’ Johnson: ‘Nay, sir, it is more likely you should forget me than that I should forget you.’ As the vessel put out to sea I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner; and at last I perceived him walk back into the town, and he disappeared.”

Thus, in a thousand ways, they all appear and disappear—all those worthy ones who contribute so largely to the pleasure which we derive as we run to and fro upon the earth. For, however interested we may be in the configuration of a country or the architecture of a church, the human interest outlives all others and prevails at the last. I felt this more strongly than ever before as I looked back upon Harwich from the steamer that bore me to Felixstowe, and thence to Southend. Even where an imaginary human interest has been created,

it is more potent than much natural charm : Devonshire lives most vividly in the pages of Blackmore ; the fortunes of innumerable Scotchmen were made for them by Scott ; and to sojourn at Stratford-on-Avon is to live with Shakespeare.

The boat that bore me from Constable's country was built by trusty hands. I can but use a hackneyed phrase ; for truly she "walked the waters like a thing of life." A stiff, south-west wind resisted her as we stood well out from the Essex coast, and waves burst over the face of the starboard paddle, drenching the after-deck from end to end. But the sun shone brightly as we neared Walton-on-the-Naze, and the run home was all too short. We noted familiar landmarks as we passed : there were the mouths of the Colne and the Blackwater ; there, or thereabouts, stood the barn-like Chapel of St. Peter-on-the-Wall ; there lay Foulness Island ; there Havengore. Then, as we rounded Shoeburyness, the wooded slopes of Sheppey Isle, clear in the light of early evening, lay off our port quarter ; and more directly ahead we saw Sheerness and the mouth of the Medway, so deftly portrayed in the etchings of Wyllie. Lastly, facing about, we saw the spire of St. Erkenwald's Church looking down upon "sunny Southend," and knew our little voyage concluded.

THE END.



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